Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

AUGUST 1957
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FEATURING

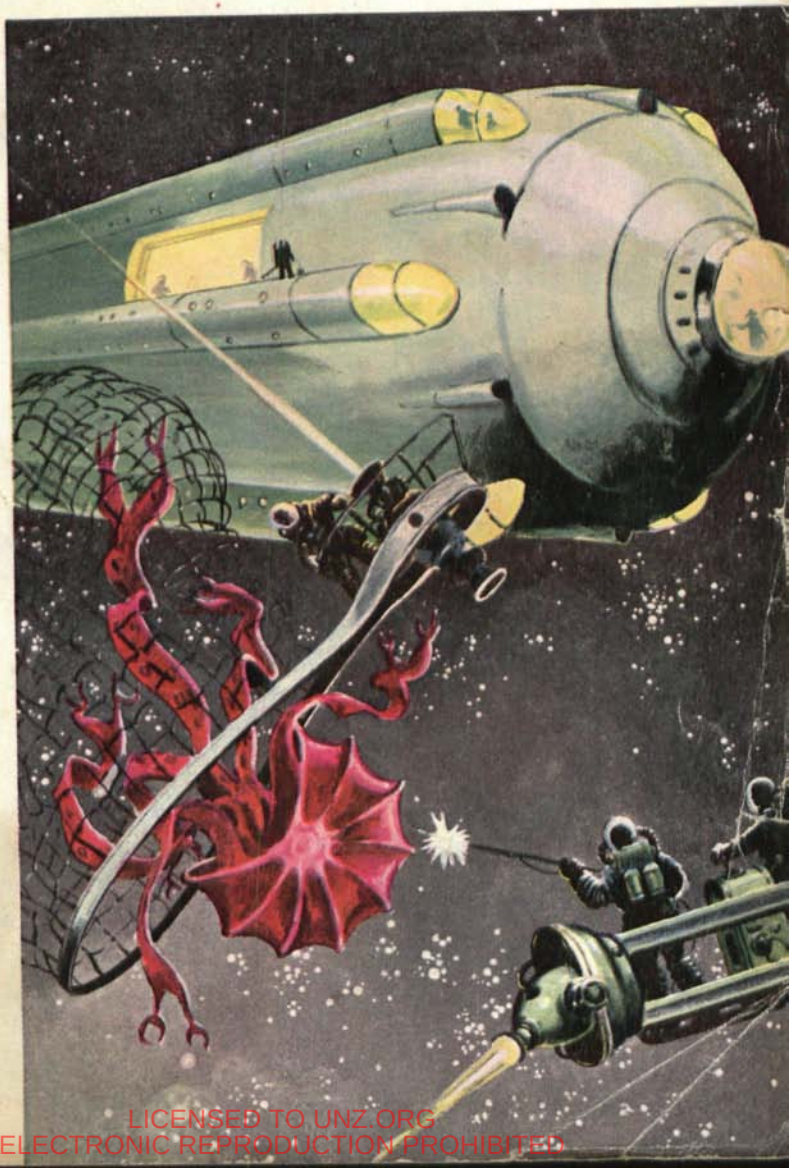
For Castaways n the Future . . .
TIME WAITS FOR WINTHROP
By
WILLIAM TENN

•

HOW DO VE STAND IN THE SPACE RACE?
Read
OUR MISSILE ARSENAL
By
WILLY LEY

•

AND OTHER STORIES



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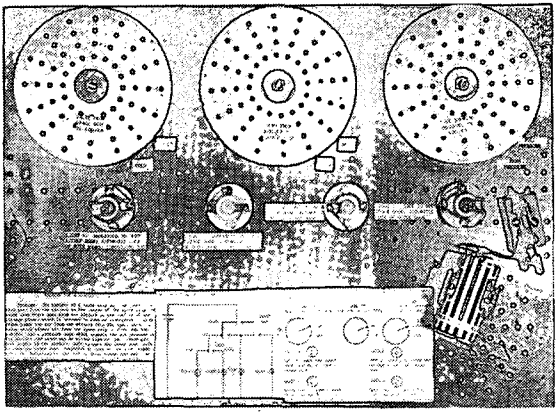

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Galaxy

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WILLY LEY, Science Editor
W. I. VAN DER POEL, Art Director JOAN J. De MARIO, Production Manager

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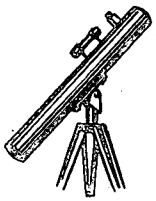

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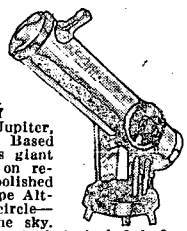

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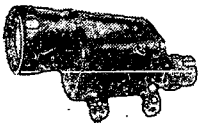

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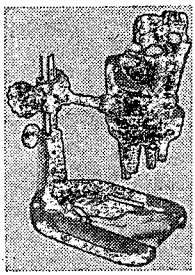

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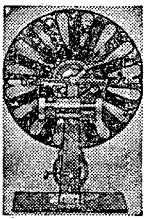

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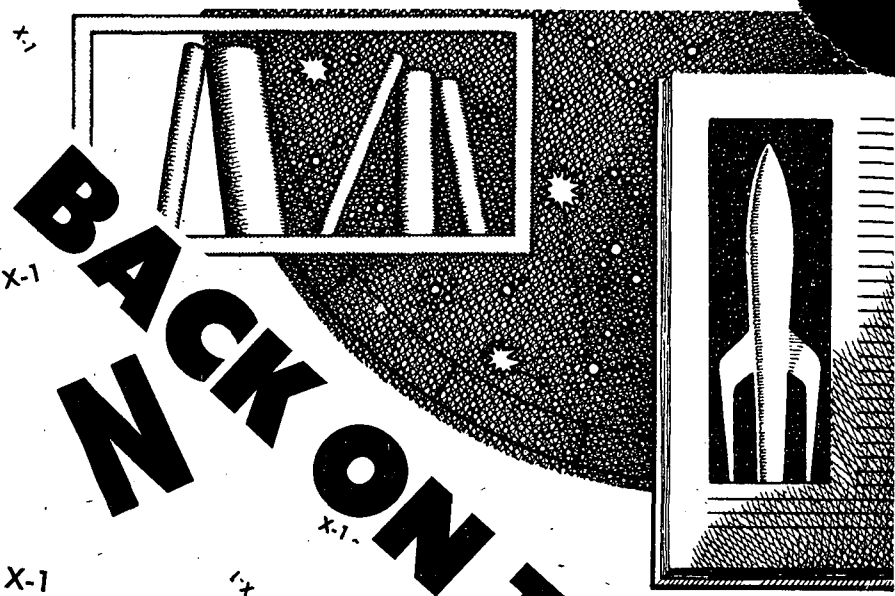

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Time Waits for Winthrop

By WILLIAM TENN

Winthrop was literally the most stubborn and selfish man in five hundred years—how could they convince him not to strand them in this society of Shriek Fields and Panic Stadiums?

Illustrated by FINLAY

THAT was the trouble right there—Winthrop was stubborn.

Mrs. Brucks stared wildly at her three fellow-visitors from the twentieth century. "But he's got to think of us, too! He can't leave us stuck in this crazy world!"

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Dave Pollock shrugged the shoulders of the conservative gray suit that clashed so mightily with the décor of the twenty-fifth-century room. He was a thin, nervous young man whose hands had a tendency to perspire.

"He says we should be grateful.

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But whether we are or aren't grateful isn't important to him. He's staying."

"That means *we* have to stay," Mrs. Brucks said. "Doesn't he understand that?"

Pollock spread his moist palms helplessly. "What difference does it make? He *likes* the twenty-fifth century. I argued with him for two hours and I've never seen anyone so stubborn. I can't budge him."

"Why don't *you* talk to him, Mrs. Brucks?" Mary Ann Carthington suggested. "He's been nice to you. Maybe you could make him act sensible."

"Hm." Mrs. Brucks patted her hairdo which, after two weeks in the future, was beginning to get straggly. "You think so? Mr. Mead, you think it's a good idea?"

The fourth person in the oval room, a stoutish middle-aged man, considered the matter for a moment. "Can't do any harm. Might work. And we've got to do *something*."

"All right. So I'll try."

MRS. BRUCKS sniffled deep within her grandmotherly soul. To the others, Winthrop and she were the "old folks"—both over fifty. Therefore they should be able to communicate more easily. The fact that Winthrop was ten years her senior meant little to Mr. Mead's forty-six years, less to Dave Pollock's thirty-four and in all probability was completely meaningless to Mary Ann Carthington's twenty. One of the "old folks" should be able to talk sense to the other, they were thinking.

What could they see, from the bubbling distance of youth, of the chasms that separated Winthrop from Mrs. Brucks even more finally than the others? It was unimportant to them that he was a tight and unemotional old bachelor, while she was the warm and gossipy mother of six children, the grandmother of two, with her silver wedding anniversary proudly behind her. She and Winthrop had barely exchanged a dozen sentences with each other since they'd arrived in the future; they had disliked each other from the moment they had met in Washington at the time-travel finals.

But — Winthrop was stubborn. That fact remained. Mr. Mead had roared his best executive-type roars at him. Mary Ann Carthington had tried to jog his senility with her lush, young figure and most fluttery voice. Even Dave Pollock, an educated man, a high school science teacher, had talked his heart out to him and been unable to make him budge.

Someone had to change Winthrop's mind or they'd all be stuck in the future, here in this horrible twenty-fifth century.

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if she hated it more than ything she'd had to face in a lifetime of troubles, it was up to Mrs. Brucks.

She rose and shook out the wrinkles in the expensive black dress her proud husband had purchased in Lord & Taylor's the day before the group had left.

Try to tell Sam that it was pure luck that she had been chosen, just a matter of fitting the physical specifications in the message from the future! Sam wouldn't listen: he'd probably boasted all over the shop, to all the other cutters with whom he worked, about his wife — one of five people selected in the whole United States to make a trip five hundred years into the future. Would Sam still be boasting when the six o'clock deadline passed that night and she didn't return?

This time the sniffle worked its way through the cushions of her bosom and reached her nose.

Mary Ann Carthington crooned sympathetically, "Shall I call for the jumper, Mrs. Brucks?"

"I'm crazy?" Mrs. Brucks shot back angrily. "A little walk down the hall, I need that headache-maker? A little walk I can walk."

SHE started for the door rapidly, before the girl could summon the upsetting device which exploded you from one place to another and left you with your head swimming and your stomach splashing.

But she paused and took a last wistful look at the room before leaving it. While it was by no means a cozy five-room apartment in the Bronx, she'd spent almost every minute of her two weeks in the future here, and for all of its peculiar furniture and oddly colored walls, she hated to leave it. At least here nothing rippled along the floor, nothing reached out from the walls: here was as much sanity as you could find in the twenty-fifth century.

Then she swallowed hard and closed the door behind her. She walked hurriedly along the corridor, being careful to stay in the exact middle, the greatest distance possible from the bumpy writhing walls on either side.

At a point in the corridor where one purple wall flowed restlessly around a stable yellow square, she stopped. She put her mouth, fixed in distaste, to the square. "Mr. Winthrop?"

"Well, well, if it isn't Mrs. Brucks!" the square boomed back at her. "Long time no see. Come right in, Mrs. Brucks."

The patch of yellow showed a tiny hole in the center which dilated rapidly into a doorway. She stepped through gingerly, as if there might be a drop of several stories on the other side.

The room was shaped like a

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long, narrow isosceles triangle. There was no furniture in it, and no other exits, except for what an occasional yellow square suggested. Streaks of color chased themselves fluently along the walls and ceilings and floors, shifting up and down the spectrum, from pinkish gray to a thick, dark ultramarine. And odors came and went with the colors, some of them unpleasant, some intriguing, but all of them touched with the unfamiliar and alien.

From somewhere behind the walls and above the ceiling there was music, its tones softly echoing, gently reinforcing the colors and the odors. The music, too, was strange to twentieth-century ears: strings of dissonances would be followed by long or short silences, in the midst of which an almost inaudible melody might be heard like a harmonic island in an ocean of sonic strangeness.

At the sharp apex of the triangle, an aged little man lay on a raised portion of the floor. Periodically, this would raise or lower part of itself, very much like a cow trying to find a comfortable position on the grass.

The single garment that Winthrop wore similarly kept adjusting itself upon him. At one moment, it would be a striped red and white tunic, covering everything from his shoulders to his thighs; then it would slowly elongate into a green gown [illegible] trickled over his outstretch[illegible] toes; and abruptly, it would contract into a pair of light brown shorts decorated with a complete pattern of brilliant blue seashells.

MRS. BRUCKS observed all this with disapproval. A man was meant, she felt, to be dressed approximately the same way from one minute to the next.

The shorts she didn't mind, though her modest soul considered them a bit too skimpy for receiving lady callers. The green gown — well, if he wanted to wear what was essentially a dress, it was his business. Even the red and white tunic which reminded her nostalgically of her granddaughter Debbie's sunsuit was something she was willing to be generous about. But at least stick to *one* of them!

Winthrop put the enormous egg he was holding on the floor. "Have a seat, Mrs. Brucks. Take the load off your feet," he said jovially.

Shuddering at the hillock of floor which came into being at her host's gesture, Mrs. Brucks finally bent her knees and uneasily sat. "How — how are you, Mr. Winthrop?"

"Couldn't be better, Mrs. Brucks. Say, have you seen my new teeth? Just got them this morning. Look."

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[redacted] opened his jaws and pulled [redacted] lips back with his fingers.

Mrs. Brucks, really interested, inspected the mouthful of white, shining teeth. "A good job," she pronounced at last. "The dentists here made them for you so fast?"

"Dentists!" He spread his bony arms in a vast and merry gesture. "They don't have *dentists in* 2458 A.D. They *grew* these teeth for me, Mrs. Brucks."

"*Grew?* How *grew?*"

"How should I know how they did it? They're smart, that's all. A lot smarter than us, every way. I just heard about the regeneration clinic. It's a place where you lose an arm, you go down there, they grow it right back on the stump. Free, like everything else. I went down there, I said 'I want new teeth" to the machine that they've got. The machine tells me to take a seat, it goes one, two, three and bingo, there I am, throwing my plates away. You want to try it?"

She shifted uncomfortably on her hillock. "Maybe — but I better wait until it's perfected."

Winthrop laughed again. "You're like the others, scared of the twenty-fifth century. Anything new, anything different, you want to run for a hole like a rabbit. I'm the oldest, but that doesn't make any difference — I'm the only one with guts."

Mrs. Brucks smiled tremulously at him. "But you're also the only one without no one to go back to. I got a family, Mr. Mead has a family, Mr. Pollock's just married, a newlywed, and Miss Carthington is engaged. We'd all like to go back, Mr. Winthrop."

"Mary Ann is engaged? I'd never have guessed it from the way she was playing up to that temporal supervisor fellow."

"Still and all, Mr. Winthrop, she's engaged. To a bookkeeper in her office, a fine, hard-working boy. And she wants to go back to him."

THE old man pulled up his back and the floor-couch hunched up between his shoulder-blades and scratched him gently. "Let her go back then. Who gives a damn?"

Mrs. Brucks turned her hands palm up in front of her. "Remember what they told us when we arrived? We *all* have to be sitting in our chairs in the Time Machine Building at six o'clock on the dot. If we aren't *all* there *on* time, they can't make the transfer, they said. So if one of us, if you, for an instance, don't show up —"

"Don't tell me your troubles!" His face was flushed and his lips came back and exposed the brand-new teeth. There was a sharp acrid smell in the room and blotches of crimson on its walls as the place adjusted to its own-

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er's mood. The music changed to a vicious rumble. "Everybody wants Winthrop to do a favor for them. What did they ever do for Winthrop?"

"I don't understand you."

"You're damn tooting you don't understand me! When I was a kid, my old man used to come home drunk every night and beat the hell out of me. I was a small kid, so every other kid on the block took turns beating the hell out of me, too. When I grew up, I got a lousy job and a lousy life. Remember the depression? Who do you think was on those breadlines? Me, that's who! And then, when the good times came back, I was too old for a decent job. Night-watchman, berry-picker, dishwasher. Cheap flophouses, cheap furnished rooms. Everybody gets the gravy, Winthrop got the garbage."

He picked up the large egg-shaped object he had been examining when she entered and studied it moodily. "Yeah. And like you said, everybody has someone to go back to, everybody but me. You're damn tooting I don't have anyone to go back to. *Damn* tooting. I never had a friend, never had a wife, never even had a girl that stayed around longer than it took her to use up the loose change in my pocket. So why should I go back? I'm happy here. I get everything I want and I don't have to pay for it. [illegible] people want to go back because you feel different — uncomfortable, out of place. I'm used to being out of place: I'm right at home and I'm having a good time. I'm *staying*."

"LISTEN, Mr. Winthrop." Mrs. Brucks leaned forward anxiously, then jumped as the seat under her slunk forward. "Mr. Winthrop, everybody has troubles in their life. With my daughter Annie, I had a time that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. And with my Julius — But because I have troubles, you think I should take it out on other people? I should prevent them from going home when they're sick and tired of jumper machines and food machines and — I don't know — *machine* machines and —"

"Speaking of food machines," Winthrop perked up, "have you seen my new food phonograph? Latest model. I said I wanted one, and first thing this morning, a brand-new one is delivered to my door. No fuss, no bother, no money. What a world!"

"But it's not *your world*, Mr. Winthrop. Even if everything is free, you're not entitled. You got to *belong* to be entitled."

"There's nothing in their laws about that," he commented absent-mindedly as he opened the huge egg and peered inside at the

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[redacted]tion of dials and switches [redacted] spigots. "See, Mrs. Brucks? *Double* volume controls, *double* intensity controls, *triple* vitamin controls. With this one, you can raise the fat content of a meal, say, while reducing its sweetness with that doohickey there — and if you press that switch, you can compress the whole meal so it's no bigger than a mouthful and you're still hungry enough to try a couple of other compositions. Want to try it? I got it set for the latest number by Unni Oehele, that new Aldebaranian composer — *Memories of a Martian Soufflé.*"

She shook her head emphatically. "No. By me, a meal is served in plates. I don't want to try it. Thank you very much."

"Believe me, lady, you're missing something. The first course is a kind of light, fast movement, all herbs from Aldebaran IV mixed with a spicy vinegar from Aldebaran IX. The second course, *Consommé Grand,* is a lot slower and kind of majestic. Oehele bases it all on a broth made from the white *chund,* a kangaroo animal they have on Aldebaran IV. See, he uses only native Alebaranian foods to *suggest* a Martian dish. Get it? The same thing Kratzmeier did in *A Long, Long Dessert on Deimos and Phobos,* only it's a lot better. More modern-like, if you know what I mean. Now in the *third* course, Oehele really takes off. He —"

"Please, Mr. Winthrop!" Mrs. Brucks begged. "Enough!" She glared at him. She'd had her fill of this sort of thing from her son Julius years ago, when he'd been running around with a crazy crowd from City College and been spouting hours of incomprehensible trash at her that he'd picked up from newspaper musical reviews and the printed notes in record albums. One thing she'd learned was how to recognize an art phony.

WINTHROP shrugged. "Okay, okay. But you'd think you'd at least want to try it. The others at least took a bite of classical Kratzmeier or Gura-Hok. They didn't like it, they spat it out — fine. But you've been living on nothing but that damn twentieth-century grub since we arrived. After the first day, you haven't set foot outside your room. And the way you asked the room to decorate itself — it's so old-fashioned, it makes me sick! You're living in the twenty-fifth century, lady! Wake up!"

"Mr. Winthrop," she said sternly, "yes or no? You're going to be nice or not?"

"You're in your fifties," he pointed out. "*Fifties,* Mrs. Brucks. In our time, you can expect to live what? Ten or fifteen more

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years. Tops. Here, you might see another thirty, maybe forty. Me, I figure I'm good for at least twenty. With the medical machines they got, they can do wonders. And no wars to worry about, no epidemics, no depressions, nothing. Everything free, lots of exciting things to do, Mars, Venus, the stars. Why in hell are you so crazy to go back?"

Mrs. Brucks' already half-dissolved self-control gave way completely. "Because it's my home! Because it's what I understand! Because I want to be with my husband, my children, my grandchildren! And because I don't *like* it here, Mr. Winthrop!"

"So go back!" Winthrop yelled. The room, which for the last few moments had settled into a pale golden yellow, turned rose color again. "There's not one of you with the guts of a cockroach. Even that young fellow, what's-his-name, Dave Pollock, I thought *he* had guts. He went out with me for the first week and he tried everything once. But he got scared, too, and went back to his little old comfy room. It's too *dec-a-dent*, he says, too *dec-a-dent*. So take him with you and get the hell back, all of you!"

"But we *can't*, Mr. Winthrop. Remember they said the transfer has to be complete on both sides? One stays behind, all stay. We can't go back without you."

Winthrop smiled and st[illegible] the throbbing vein on his ne[illegible] "You're damn tooting you can't go back without me. And I'm staying. This is one time that old Winthorp calls the tune."

"Please, Mr. Winthrop, don't be stubborn. Be nice. Don't make us force you."

"You can't force me," he told her with a triumphant leer. "I know my rights. According to the law of twenty-fifth-century America, no human being can be forced to do anything. Fact. You try to gang up on me, all I do is set up a holler that I'm being forced and a flock of government machines show up and turn me loose. Put that in your old calabash and smoke it!"

"Listen," she said as she turned to leave. "At six o'clock, we'll all be in the Time Machine Building. Maybe you'll change your mind, Mr. Winthrop."

"That's one thing you can be sure of—I won't change my mind."

So Mrs. Brucks went back to her room and told the others that Winthrop was stubborn as ever.

OLIVER T. MEAD, vice-president in charge of public relations for Sweetbottom Septic Tanks, Inc., of Gary, Indiana, drummed impatiently on the arm of the red leather easy chair that Mrs. Brucks' room had created

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[redacted]ially but uneasily for him.

"Ridiculous!" he exclaimed. "That a derelict, a vagrant, should be able to keep people from going about their business . . . do you know there's going to be a nationwide sales conference of Sweetbottom retail outlets in a few days? I absolutely must return tonight as scheduled, no ifs, no ands, no buts. There's going to be one unholy mess, I can tell you, if the responsible parties in this period don't see to that."

"I bet there will be," Mary Ann Carthington said from behind round, respectful and well-mascaraed eyes. "A big firm like that can really give them what for, Mr. Mead."

Dave Pollock grimaced at her wearily. "A firm five hundred years out of existence? Who're they going to complain to — the history books?"

As the portly man stiffened angrily, Mrs. Brucks held up her hands and said, "Let's talk, let's think it out, only don't fight. You think it's the truth we can't force him to go back?"

Mr. Mead leaned back and stared out of a non-existent window. "Could be. Then again, it might not. I'm willing to believe anything of 2458 by now, but this smacks of criminal irresponsibility. That they should invite us to visit their time and then not make every possible effort to see that we return safe and sound — besides, what about their people visiting in *our* time, the five with whom we transferred? If we're stuck here, they'll be stuck in 1958. Forever. Any government worthy of the name owes protection to its citizens traveling abroad. Without it, it's less than worthless: a tax-grubbing, boondoggling, inept bureaucracy!"

Mary Ann Carthington's pert little face had been nodding in time to his fist beating on the red leather armchair. "That's what I say. Only the government seems to be all machines. How can you argue with machines? The only government *man* we've seen since we arrived was that Mr. Storku who welcomed us to the United States of 2458. And he didn't seem very interested in us. At least he didn't *show* any interest."

"The Chief of Protocol for the State Department, you mean?" Dave Pollock asked. "The one who yawned when you told him how distinguished he looked?"

THE girl made a light slapping gesture at him. "Oh, *you*."

"Well, then, here's what we have to do. One." Mr. Mead rose and proceeded to open the fingers of his right hand a single finger at a time. "We have to go on the basis of the only human being in the government we've met personally, this Mr. Storku. Two, we

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have to select a representative from among us. Three, this representative has to see Mr. Storku and lay the *facts* before him. How his government managed somehow to communicate with our government the fact that time travel was possible, but only if certain physical laws were taken into consideration, most particularly the law of — the law of — What *is* that law, Pollock?"

"Conservation of energy and mass. If you want to transfer five people from 2458 to 1958, you have to replace them simultaneously in their own time with five people of exactly the same structure and mass from the time they're going to. Otherwise, you'd have a gap in the mass of one space-time continuum and a corresponding surplus in the other. It's like a chemical equation —"

"I'm not a student in one of your classes. You don't have to impress *me*, Pollock," Mr. Mead said. "Thank you for the explanation."

"Who was trying to impress you?" Pollock demanded belligerently. "I just tried to clear up something you seemed to have a lot of trouble understanding. That's at the bottom of our problem: the law of the conservation of energy and mass. And the way the machine's been set for all five of us and all five of them, nobody can do anything about transferring unless all of us and all of them are present at both ends of the connection at the very same moment."

"All right," Mr. Mead said. "All right! Thank you very much for your lesson, but now, if you don't mind, I'd like to go on. Some of us aren't civil service workers. Our time is valuable."

"Listen to the tycoon, will you? *His* time is valuable. Look, Ollie, my friend, as long as Winthrop goes on being stubborn, we're all stuck here together. And as long as we're stuck here, we're all greenhorns together in 2458. For your information, right now, your time is my time, and vice versa."

"Sh-h-h!" Mrs. Brucks commanded. "Be nice. Go on talking, Mr. Mead. It's very interesting. Isn't it interesting, Miss Carthington?"

The blonde girl nodded. "It sure is. They don't make people executives for nothing. You put things so — so *right*, Mr. Mead."

OLIVER T. MEAD, somewhat mollified, smiled a slender thanks at her. "Three, then. We lay the facts before this Mr. Storku. We tell him how we came in good faith, after we were selected by a nationwide contest to find the exact opposite numbers of the five people from his time. How we did it partly out of a natural and understandable curi-

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[redacted]y to see what the future looks like, and partly out of patriotism. Yes, patriotism! For is not this America of 2458 *our* America, however strange and inexplicable the changes in it? As patriots, we could follow no other course. As patriots, we —"

"Oh, for God's sake!" the high school teacher exploded. "You're no subversive, all right? What's your *idea?*"

There was a long silence in the room while the stout middle-aged man went through a pantomime of fighting for control. "Pollock, if you don't want to hear what I have to say, you can always take a breather in the hall! *As I was saying,* having explained the background facts to Mr. Storku, we come to point four, the fact that Winthrop refuses to return with us. And we demand — do you hear me? — we *demand* that the American government of this time take the appropriate steps to insure our safe return to our own era even if it involves — well, *martial law* relative to Winthrop."

"Is that your idea?" Dave Pollock asked derisively. "What if Storku says no?"

"He can't say no if it's put to him with authority. We are American citizens. We demand our rights. If he won't recognize our citizenship, we demand to be sent back where we came from. He can't refuse. We explain the risks his government runs: loss of good will, irreparable damage to future contacts between the two eras, his government standing convicted of a breach of faith — that sort of thing. It's just a matter of finding the right words and making them good and strong."

Mrs. Brucks nodded agreement "Absolutely. You can do it, Mr. Mead."

The stout man seemed jolted "*I?*"

"Of course!" Mary Ann Carthington said enthusiastically. "Just like you said, Mr. Mead, it has to be said good and strong. That's the way *you* can say it."

"I'd — well, I'd rather not. I don't think I'm the best one for the job. Storku and I don't get along too well. Somebody else, I think, would be —"

DAVE POLLOCK laughed. "Now don't be modest, Ollie. You get along with Storku as well as any of us. You're elected. Besides, isn't this public relations work? You're a big man in public relations."

Mr. Mead tried to pour all the hatred in the Universe at him in one long look. Then he shot out his cuffs and straightened his shoulders. "Very well. If none of you feel up to the job, I'll take it on myself. Be back soon."

"Jumper, Ollie?" Pollock asked. "It's faster."

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"No, thank you," Mr. Mead said curtly. "I'll walk. I need the exercise."

He hurried through the corridor and toward the staircase. Though he went down them at a springy executive trot, the stairs seemed to feel he wasn't going fast enough. An escalator motion began, growing more and more rapid, until he stumbled and almost fell.

"Stop, dammit!" he yelled. "I can do this myself!"

The stairs immediately stopped flowing downward. He wiped his face with a large white handkerchief and started down again. After a few moments, the stairs turned into an escalator once more.

Again and again, he had to order them to stop; again and again, they obeyed him, and then sneakily tried to help him along. He seethingly gave up forbidding the stairs to assist him, and when he reached ground level, he was moving so fast that he rocketed out of the empty lobby of the building and onto the sidewalk. He might have broken a leg or dislocated his back.

Fortunately, the sidewalk began moving under him. As he tottered from right to left, the sidewalk did so, too, gently but expertly keeping him balanced. He finally got his footing and took a couple of deep breaths.

Under him, the sidewalk trembled slightly, waiting for him to choose a direction so that it could help.

Mr. Mead looked around desperately. There was no one in sight along the broad avenue in either direction.

"What a world!" he moaned. "What a loony-bin of a world! You'd think there'd be a cop — somebody!"

Suddenly there was somebody. There was the *pop-pop* of a jumper mechanism in operation slightly overhead and a man appeared some twelve feet in the air. Behind him, there was an orange hedgelike affair, covered with eyes.

A PORTION of the sidewalk formed a mound under the two creatures and lowered them gently to surface level.

"Listen!" Mr. Mead yelled. "Am I glad I ran into you! I'm trying to get to the State Department and I'm having trouble. I'd appreciate a little assistance —"

"Sorry," the other man said. "Klap-Lillth and I will have to be back on Ganymede in a half-hour. We're late for an appointment as is. Why don't you call a government machine?"

"Who is he?" the orange hedge inquired as they began to move swiftly to the entrance of a building, the sidewalk under them

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[redacted]ing like a happy river. "He [redacted]esn't narga to me like one of you."

"Time traveler," his companion explained. "From the past. One of the exchange tourists who came in two weeks ago."

"Aha!" said the hedge. "From the *past*. No wonder I couldn't narga him. It's just as well. You know, on Ganymede we don't believe in time travel. It's against our religion."

The Earthman chuckled and dug the hedge in the twigs with his elbow. "You and your religion! When was the last time you attended a *shkootseem* ceremony?"

"Not since the last syzygy of Jupiter and the Sun," the hedge admitted. "But that's not the point. I'm still in good standing. What all you humans fail to understand about the Ganymedan religion . . ."

His rustling voice trailed off as they disappeared inside the building. Mead almost spat after them. Then he recollected himself. It was two o'clock. He didn't have much time to fool around — besides, he was in a strange world with customs insanely different from his own and who knew what the penalties were for spitting?

"I want a government machine," he said resignedly to the empty air.

He felt a little foolish, but that was what they had been told to do in any emergency. And, sure enough, a gleaming affair of wires and coils and multi-colored plates appeared beside him.

"Yes?" a toneless voice inquired. "Service needed?"

"I'm on my way to see Mr. Storku at our Department of State," Mr. Mead explained, staring suspiciously at the largest coil near him, "and I'm having trouble walking on the sidewalk. I'm liable to fall and kill myself if it doesn't stop moving under me."

"Sorry, sir, but no one has fallen on a sidewalk for at least two hundred years. May I suggest you take a jumper?"

"I don't *want* to take a jumper. I want to walk. All you have to do is tell this damn sidewalk to relax and be quiet."

"Sorry, sir," the machine replied, "but the sidewalk has its job to do. Besides, Mr. Storku is not at his office. He is taking some spiritual exercise at either Shriek Field or Panic Stadium."

"Oh, no!" Mr. Mead groaned. His worst fears had been realized. He didn't want to go to those places again.

"Sorry, sir, but he is. Just a moment while I check." There were bright blue flashes among the coils. "Yes, Mr. Storku is doing a shriek today. He feels he has been over-aggressive recently. He invites you to join him."

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MR. MEAD considered. He was not the slightest bit interested in going to one of those places where sane people became madmen for a couple of hours. On the other hand, time *was* short and Winthrop *was* still stubborn.

"All right," he said unhappily. "I'll join him."

"Shall I call a jumper, sir?"

The portly man stepped back. "No! I'll — I'll walk."

"Sorry, sir, but you would never get there before the shriek has begun."

Sweetbottom's vice-president in charge of public relations worked hard to calm himself. He must remember that this was just a machine into whose circuits a given set of vocal reactions had been built. If he had an apoplectic fit in front of it, it would merely summon another machine, a medical one. All you could do was give it information or receive information from it.

"I-don't-like-jumpers," he said between his teeth.

"Sorry, sir, but you expressed a desire to see Mr. Storku. If you are willing to wait until the shriek is over, there is no problem, except that you would be well advised to start immediately for the Odor Festival on Venus, where he is going next. If you wish to see him now, however, you must take a jumper. There are no other possibilities, sir, unless you feel that my memory circuits are adequate or you'd like to add new factor to the discussion."

Mr. Mead sagged. "Okay, okay! Call a jumper."

"Yes, sir. Here you are, sir." The empty cylinder that suddenly materialized over Mr. Mead's head caused him to start, but while he was opening his mouth to say, "Hey! I changed my —" it slid down over him.

There was darkness. He felt as if his stomach were being gently but insistently pulled out through his mouth. His liver, spleen and lungs seemed to follow suit. Then the bones of his body all fell inward to the center of his now-empty abdomen and dwindled in size until they disappeared. He collapsed upon himself.

Abruptly he was whole and solid again and standing in a large green meadow, with dozens of people around him. His stomach returned to its proper place and squirmed irritatedly back into position.

"— changed my mind. I'll walk after all," he said, and threw up.

STORKU, a tall, genial, yellow-haired young man, was standing in front of him when the spasms had subsided. "It's such a simple thing, really, Mr. Mead. Just a matter of being intently placid during the jump."

"Easy — easy to say," Mr. Mead

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ed. What was the reason Storku always exuded such patronizing contempt toward him? "Why don't you people — why don't you people find another way to travel? In my time, comfort in transportation is the keystone, the very *keystone* of the industry. Any railroad, busline or airline which doesn't see to it that their passengers enjoy maximum comfort is out of business before you can bat an eye. Either that or they have a new board of directors."

"ISN'T he *intriguing?*" a girl near him said to her escort. "He talks just like one of those historical romances."

Mr. Mead glanced at her sourly, then gulped. She was nude. For that matter, so was everyone else around him, including Mr. Storku. Who, he wondered nervously, knew what went on at these Shriek Field affairs? After all, he had only seen them before from a distance in the grandstand. And now he was right in the middle of these deliberate lunatics.

"Surely you're being a bit unjust," Mr. Storku suggested. "If an Elizabethan Englishman or a man from the Classic Greek period were to go for a ride in one of your horseless carriages or iron horses — to use your vernacular — he would exhibit much more discomfort than you have. It's purely a matter of adjustment to the unfamiliar. Some adjust, like your contemporary Winthrop; some don't, like yourself."

"Speaking of Winthrop —" Mr. Mead began hurriedly, glad of the opening.

"Everybody here?" an athletic young man burst in as he bounded up. "I'm your leader for this shriek. On your feet, everybody, come on, let's get those kinks out of our muscles. We're going to have a real fine shriek — all it takes is teamwork!"

"Take your clothes off," the government man told Mr. Mead. "You can't run a shriek dressed. Especially dressed like that."

Mr. Mead shrank back. "I just came here to talk to you. I'll watch."

A rich, roaring laugh from Storku. "You can't watch from the middle of Shriek Field! And besides, the moment you joined us, you were automatically registered for the shriek. If you withdraw now, you'll throw everything off."

"I will?"

"Of course. A different quantity of stimuli has to be applied to any different quantity of people, if you want to develop a specific shriek-intensity in each one of them. Take your clothes off, man, and get into the thing. It will tone up your psyche magnificently."

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MR. MEAD thought it over, then began to undress. He was embarrassed, miserable and more than a little frightened at the prospect, but he had an urgent job of public relations to do on the yellow-haired young man.

In his time, he had gurgled pleasurably over ropelike cigars given him by politicians, gotten drunk in ghastly little bars with important newspapermen, and suffered the slings and the arrows of outrageous television quiz shows — all in the interests of Sweetbottom Septic Tanks, Inc. The motto of the Public Relations Man was strictly *When in Rome* . . .

And obviously the crowd he had made this trip with from 1958 was composed of bunglers. They'd never get themselves and him back to their own time, back to a world where there was a supply-and-demand system that made sense. A world where an important business executive was treated like *somebody,* where the walls didn't ripple around you, the furniture didn't adjust constantly under you, where the very clothes on a person's back didn't change from moment to moment as if being revolved in a kaleidoscope.

No, it was up to him to get everybody back to that world and his only channel of effective operation lay through Storku. Therefore, Storku had to be pla[illegible] and made to feel that Oliver Mead was one of the boys.

Besides, it occurred to him as he began slipping out of his clothes, some of these girls looked real cute. They reminded him of the Septic Tank Convention at Des Moines back in July. If only they didn't shave their heads!

"All together, now," the shriek leader sang out. "Let's bunch up. All together in a tight little group, all bunched up and milling around."

Mr. Mead was pushed and jostled into the crowd. It surged forward, back, right, left, being maneuvered into a smaller and smaller group under the instructions and shoving of the shriek leader. Music sprang up around them — more noise than music, actually, since it had no discernible harmonic relationships and grew louder and louder until it was almost deafening.

Someone striving for balance hit Mr. Mead in the stomach with an outflung arm. He said "Oof!" and then "Oof!" again as someone behind him piled into his back.

"Watch *out!*" a girl near him moaned as he trod on her foot.

"Sorry," he told her, "I just couldn't —" and then an elbow hit him in the eye and he went lurching away a few steps, until, the group changing its direction again, he was pushed forward.

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[redacted]OUND and round he went on the grass, being pushed and pushing, the horrible noise almost tearing his eardrums apart. From what seemed a greater and greater distance, he could hear the shriek leader chanting: "Come on, this way, hurry up! No, that way, around that tree. Back into the bunch, you. Stay *together*. Now, backward, that's right, *backward*. Faster, *faster*."

They went backward, a great mass of people pushing on Mead, jamming him into the great mass of people immediately behind him. Then, abruptly, they went forward again, a dozen little cross-currents of humanity at work against each other in the crowd, so that as well as moving forward, he was also being hurled a few feet to the right and then turned around and being yanked back diagonally to his left. Once or twice, he was shot to the outskirts of the group, but, much to his surprise, all he did was claw his way back into the jam-packed surging middle.

It was as if he belonged nowhere else but in this mob of hurrying madmen. A shaved female head crashing into his chest, as the only hint that the group had changed its direction, was what he had come to expect. He threw himself back and disregarded the grunts and yelps he helped create. He was part of this — this — whatever it was. He was hysterical, bruised and slippery with sweat, but he no longer thought about anything but staying on his feet in the mob.

He was part of it and that was all he knew.

Suddenly, somewhere outside the maelstrom of running, jostling naked bodies, there was a yell. It was a long yell, in a powerful male voice, and it went on and on, almost drowning out the noise-music. A woman in front of Mr. Mead picked it up in a head-rattling scream. The man who had been yelling stopped, and, after a while, so did the woman.

Then Mr. Mead heard the yell again, heard the woman join in, and was not even remotely astonished to hear his own voice add to the din. He threw all the frustration of the past two weeks into that yell, all the pounding, shoving and bruises of the past few minutes, all the frustrations and hatreds of his lifetime.

All around him, others were joining it, too, until at last there was a steady, unanimous shriek from the tight mob that slipped and fell and chased itself all over the green meadow. Mr. Mead, in the back of his mind, experienced a childlike satisfaction in getting onto the rhythm they were working out — and in being part of working it out.

It went pulse-beat, pulse-beat,

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shriek-k-k-k, pulse - beat, pulse - beat, *shriek-k-k-k.*

All together. All around him, all together. It was good!

He was unable to figure out how long they had been running and yelling, when he noticed that he was no longer in the middle of a tight group. They were spread out over the meadow in a long, wavering, yelling line.

HE FELT a little confused. Without losing a beat in the shriek-rhythm, he made an effort to get closer to a man and woman on his right.

The yells stopped abruptly. The noise-music stopped abruptly. He stared straight ahead where everybody else was staring. He saw it, a brown, furry animal about the size of a sheep. It had thrown one startled, frightened look at them. Then it had begun running madly away across the meadow.

"Let's get it!" the shriek leader's voice sounded from what seemed all about them.

The shriek started again, a continuous, unceasing shriek, and Mr. Mead joined in. He was running across the meadow after the furry brown animal, screaming his head off, dimly and proudly conscious of fellow human beings doing the same on both sides of him.

Let's get it, his mind howled. *Let's get it, let's get it!*

Almost caught up with, the animal dodged back through the line of people. Mr. Mead flung himself at it and made a grab. He got a handful of fur and fell painfully to his knees as the animal galloped away.

He was on his feet without abating a single note of the shriek and after it in a moment. Everyone else had turned around and was running with him.

Let's get it! Let's get it! Let's get it!

Back and forth across the meadow, the animal ran and they pursued. It dodged and twisted and jerked itself free from converging groups.

Mr. Mead ran with them, ran in the very forefront. Shrieking.

No matter how the furry brown animal turned, they turned, too. They kept getting closer and closer to it.

Finally, the entire mob trapped it in a great, uneven circle and closed in. Mr. Mead was the first one to reach it. He knocked it down with a single blow. A girl leaped onto it and began tearing at it with her fingernails. Just before everyone piled on, Mr. Mead managed to grab a furry brown leg. He gave it a tremendous wrench and it came off in his hand. He was distantly surprised by the loose wires and gear mechanisms that trailed out of the torn-off leg.

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[redacted]e got it!" he mumbled, staring at the leg. *We got it,* his mind danced madly. *We got it, we got it!*

He was suddenly very tired, almost faint. He dragged himself away from the crowd and sat down heavily on the grass. He continued to stare at the loose wires that came out of the leg.

Someone came up to him, breathing hard. "Well," puffed Mr. Storku. "Did you have a nice shriek?"

Mr. Mead held up the furry brown leg. "We got it," he said bewilderedly.

THE yellow-haired young man laughed. "You need a good shower and a good sedative. Come on." He helped Mr. Mead to his feet and, holding on to his arm, walked him across the meadow to a dilated yellow square under the grandstand. All around them, the other participants in the shriek chattered gaily to each other as they cleansed themselves and readjusted their metabolism.

After his turn inside one of the many booths which filled the interior of the grandstand, Mr. Mead felt more like himself—which was not to say he felt better.

Something had come out of him in those last few moments as he tore at the mechanical quarry, something he wished infinitely had stayed at the dank bottom of his soul. He'd rather never have known it existed.

He felt vaguely, dismally, like a man who, flipping the pages of a textbook of aberrations, comes upon a particularly ugly case history which parallels his life history in every respect and understands — in a single, horrified flash — exactly what all those seemingly innocent quirks of his personality mean.

He tried to remind himself that he was still Oliver T. Mead, a good husband and father, a respected business executive, a substantial pillar of the community and the local church — but it was no help. Now, and for the rest of his life, he was also . . . this other thing.

He had to get into some clothes. Fast.

Mr. Storku understood immediately. "You probably had a lot saved up. About time you began discharging it. I wouldn't worry: you're as sane as anyone in your period. But your clothes have been cleaned off the field along with all the rubbish of our shriek; the officials are already preparing for the next one."

"What do I do?" Mr. Mead wailed. "I can't go home like this."

"No?" the government man inquired with a good deal of curiosity. "You really can't? Fascinating! Well, just step under that

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outfitter there. I suppose you'd like twentieth-century costume?"

Mr. Mead placed himself doubtfully under the indicated mechanism as a newly clad citizen of twenty-fifth-century America walked away from it. "Yes. But please make it something *sane*, something I can *wear*."

HE WATCHED as his host adjusted the dials. There was a slight hum from the machine overhead: a complete set of formal black-and-white evening wear sprang into being on the stout man's body. In a moment, it had changed into another outfit: the shoes grew upward and became hip-length rubber boots, the dinner jacket lengthened itself into a sou'wester. Mr. Mead was perfectly dressed for the bridge of any whaling ship.

"Stop it!" he begged distractedly as the sou'wester began showing distinctive sports shirt symptoms. "Keep it down to one thing!"

"You could do it yourself," Mr. Storku pointed out, "if your subconscious didn't heave about so much." Nonetheless, he good-naturedly poked at the machine again and Mr. Mead's clothes subsided into the tweed jacket and golf knickers that had been so popular in the 1920s. They held fast at that.

"Better?"

"I—I guess so." Mr. [redacted] frowned as he looked down at himself. It certainly was a queer outfit for a vice-president of Sweetbottom Septic Tanks, Inc., to return to his own time in, but at least it was *one* outfit. And as soon as he got home—

He took a deep breath. "Now look here, Storku," he said, putting aside the recent obscene memories of himself with as much determination as he could call up. "We're having trouble with this Winthrop fellow. He won't go back with us."

They walked outside and paused on the edge of the meadow. In the distance, a new shriek was being organized.

"That so?" Mr. Storku asked with no very great interest. He pointed at the ragged mob of nude figures just beginning to jostle each other into a tight bunch. "You know, two or three more sessions out there and your psyche would be in fine shape. Although, from the looks of you, I'd say Panic Stadium would be even better. Why don't you go right over there? One first-rate, screaming, headlong panic and you'd be absolutely—"

"Thank you, but my psyche is my own affair!"

The yellow-haired young man nodded seriously. "Obviously. *The adult individual's psyche is under no other jurisdiction than that of*

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dult individual concerned. The Covenant of 2314, adopted by unanimous consent of the entire population of the United States of America. Later, of course, broadened by the international plebiscite of 2337 to include the entire world. But I was just making a friendly suggestion."

Mr. Mead forced himself to smile. He was distressed to find that when he smiled, the lapels of his jacket stood up and caressed the sides of his chin affectionately. "No offense, no offense. It's just that I've had all I want of this nonsense. But what are you going to do about Winthrop?"

"Do? Why, nothing. What *can* we do?"

"You can force him to go back! You represent the government, don't you? The government invited us here, the government is responsible for our safety."

STORKU looked puzzled. "Aren't you safe?"

"You know what I mean, Storku. Our safe return. The government is responsible for it."

"Force may never be applied to a mature citizen and even official persuasion may be resorted to only in rare and carefully specified instances. This is certainly not one of them. By the time a child has gone through our educational system, he or she is a well-balanced member of society who can be trusted to do whatever is socially necessary. From that point on, government ceases to take an active role in the individual's life."

"But Winthrop isn't a citizen of your world, Storku. He didn't go through your educational system, didn't have these psychological things, these readjustment courses, every couple of years, and didn't—"

"But he came here as our invited guest," Mr. Storku pointed out. "And, as such, he's entitled to the full protection of our laws."

"And we aren't, I suppose!" Mr. Mead shouted. "He can do whatever he wants to us and get away with it. Do you call that law? Do you call that justice? *I* don't. Red-tape bureaucracy, that's all it is!"

The yellow-haired young man put his hand on Mr. Mead's shoulder. "Listen, my friend, and try to understand. If Winthrop tried to *do* anything to you, it would be stopped. Not by interfering with Winthrop directly, but by removing you from his neighborhood. In order for us to take even such limited action, he'd have to *do*. That would be *commission* of an act interfering with your rights as an individual. What Winthrop is accused of, however, is *omission* of an act. He refuses to go back with you. Well, now. He has a right to refuse to do anything with his own body and

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mind. The Covenant of 2314 covers that in so many words. Would you like me to quote the relevant passage to you?"

"No, I would not like you to quote the relevant passage to me. So you're trying to say that nobody can do anything, is that it? Winthrop can keep all of us from getting back to our own time, but you can't do anything about it and we can't do anything about it. One hell of a note."

"An interesting phrase, that," Mr. Storku commented. "If there had only been an etymologist or linguist in your group, I would enjoy discussing it with him. Your conclusion, though, at least in regard to this particular situation, is substantially correct. There is only one thing you can do — you can try to *persuade* Winthrop. Up to the last moment of the scheduled transfer, that, of course, always exists as a possible solution."

MR. MEAD brushed down his overly emotional jacket lapels. "And if we don't, we're out of luck? We can't take him by the scruff of the neck and — and —"

"I'm afraid you can't. A government machine or manufactured government official would appear on the scene and liberate him. Without any damage to your persons, you understand."

"No damage," Mr. Mead brooded. "Just leaving us stuck in this asylum for the rest o[illegible] lives, no ifs, no ands, no buts."

Mr. Storku looked hurt. "Oh, come now! It may be very different from your own culture in many ways. It may be uncomfortably alien in its artifacts and underlying philosophy. But surely there are compensations. For the loss of the old in terms of family, associates and experiences, there must be a gain in the new and exciting. Your Winthrop has found it so — he's at Panic Stadium or Shriek Field at least every other day; I've run into him at seminars and salons three times in the past ten days; and I hear from the Bureau of Home Appliances of the Department of Internal Economics that he's a steady, enthusiastic and thoroughly dedicated consumer. What he can bring himself to do —"

"Sure he gets all those gadgets," Mr. Mead sneered. "He doesn't have to pay for them. A lazy relief jack like him couldn't ask for anything better. What a world — *gahhh!*"

"My only point," Mr. Storku continued equably, "is that being 'stuck in this asylum,' as you rather vividly picture it, has its positive aspects. And since there appears to be a distinct possibility of this occurring, it would seem logical for you people to begin investigating these positive aspects somewhat more wholeheart-

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[redacted]than you have, instead of re-creating to the security of each other's company and such twentieth-century anachronisms as you are able to recreate."

"We have — all we cared to. What we want now, all of us, is to go home and to keep on living the lives we were born into. So what it comes down to is that nobody and nothing can help us with Winthrop, eh?"

Mr. Storku called for a jumper and held up a hand to arrest the huge cylinder in the air as soon as it appeared.

"I wouldn't want to go as far as that without conducting a thorough personal investigation of the matter. It's entirely possible that someone or something in the Galaxy could help you if the problem were brought to its attention and if it were sufficiently interested. It's rather a large, well-populated galaxy, you know. All I can say definitely is that the Department of State *can't* help you."

Mr. Mead pushed his fingernails deep into his palms and ground his teeth together. "You couldn't possibly," he asked at last, very, very slowly, "be just a little more specific in telling us where to go for help next? We have less than two hours left — and we won't be able to cover very much of the Galaxy in that time."

"A GOOD point," Mr. Storku said approvingly. "I'm glad to see that you have calmed down and are at last thinking clearly and resourcefully. Now who — in this immediate neighborhood — might be able to work out the solution of an insoluble problem? Well, first there's the Temporal Embassy, which handled the exchange and brought you people here. They have all kinds of connections; they can, if they feel like it, tap the total ingenuity of the human race for the next five thousand years. The trouble is, they take too much of the long view for my taste.

"Then there are the Oracle Machines which will give you the answer to any question that *can* be answered. The problem there, of course, is interpreting the answer correctly. Then, on Pluto, there's a convention this week of vector psychologists. If anyone could figure out a way of persuading Winthrop to change his mind, *they* can. Unfortunately, the dominant field of interest in vector psychology at the moment is fetal education; I'm afraid they'd find your Winthrop far too mature a specimen. Then, out around Rigel, there's a race of remarkably prescient fungi whom I can recommend from personal experience. They have a most unbelievable talent for —"

Mr. Mead waggled a frantic

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hand at him. "That's enough! That's plenty to go on for a while! We only have two hours — remember?"

"I certainly do. And since it's very unlikely that you can do anything about it in so short a time, may I suggest that you drop the whole matter and take this jumper with me to Venus? There won't be another Odor Festival there for sixty-six years. It's an experience, my friend, that should not be missed. Venus always does these things right: the greatest odor-emitters in the Universe will be there. And I'll be very happy to explain all the fine points to you. Coming?"

Mr. Mead dodged out of the way of the jumper which Mr. Storku was gesturing down invitingly. "No, *thank* you! Why is it," he complained when he had retreated to a safe distance, "that you people are always taking vacations, always going off somewhere to relax and enjoy yourselves? How the hell does any work ever get done in this cockeyed world?"

"Oh, it gets done," the yellow-haired young man laughed as the cylinder began to slide down over him. "Whenever there's something that only a human being can do, one of us — the nearest responsible individual with the appropriate training — takes care of it. But our personality goals are different from yours. In the [redacted] of the proverb: All play and [redacted] work makes Jack a full boy."

And he was gone.

So Mr. Mead went back to Mrs. Brucks' room and told the others that the Department of State, represented by Mr. Storku, couldn't help them with Winthrop's stubbornness.

MARY ANN CARTHINGTON tightened the curl of her blonde hair with a business-like forefinger while she considered the matter. "You told him all that you told us, and he still wouldn't do anything, Mr. Mead? Are you sure he knows who you are?"

Mr. Mead didn't bother to answer her. He had other problems. Not only was his spirit badly bruised and scratched by his recent experiences, but his golf knickers had just woken into sentiency. And whereas the jacket merely had attempted to express its affection by trying to cuddle under his chin, the knickers went in more for a kind of patrolling action. Up and down on his thighs they rippled; back and forth across his rear they marched.

"Sure Storku knows who he is," Dave Pollock told her. "Ollie waved his vice-presidency in his face, but Storku heard that Sweetbottom Septic Tanks Preferred fell to the bottom of the stock

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[redacted]ket just 481 years ago today, so he wasn't afraid of him or much impressed."

"I don't think that's funny," Mary Ann Carthington said, and shook her head at him once in a "so there!" gesture. She knew that old beanpole of a schoolteacher was just jealous of Mr. Mead, but she wasn't sure whether it was because he didn't make as much money or because he wasn't nearly as distinguished-looking. But if a big executive like Mr. Mead couldn't get them out of this jam, then nobody could. And that would be awful, positively awful.

She would never get back to San Francisco and Edgar Rapp. And while Edgar might not be everything a girl like Mary Ann wanted, she was quite willing to settle for him at this point. He worked hard and made a good living. His compliments were nothing much, true, but at least he could be counted on not to say anything that tore a person into worthless bits right before their very eyes, like somebody she could mention. And the sooner she could leave the twenty-fifth century and be forever away from that somebody, the better.

"Now, Mr. Mead," she cooed insistently, "I'm sure he told you *something* we could do. He didn't tell you to give up hope completely and absolutely, did he?"

THE executive caught the strap end of his knickers as it came unbuckled and started rolling exultantly up his leg. He glared at her out of eyes that had seen just too damn much, that felt things had gone just too damn far.

"He told me something we could do," he said with careful viciousness. "He said the Temporal Embassy could help us. All we need is somebody with pull in the Temporal Embassy."

Mary Ann Carthington almost bit the end off the lipstick she was applying at that moment. Mrs. Brucks and Dave Pollock had both turned to stare at her. And she knew just exactly what they were thinking.

"Well, I certainly don't —" she started to protest.

"Don't be modest, Mary Ann," Dave Pollock interrupted. "This is your big chance — and right now, it looks like our only chance. We've got about an hour and a half left. Get yourself into a jumper, skedaddle out there and turn on the charm!"

Mrs. Brucks sat down beside her and gave her shoulders the benefit of a heavy maternal arm. "Listen, Miss Carthington, sometimes we have to do things, it's not so easy. But stuck here is better? *That* you like? So —" she spread her hands —"a touch here with the powder puff, a touch there with the lipstick, a this, a

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that, and believe me, he won't know what to do first for you. Crazy about you he is already — you mean to say a little favor he wouldn't do, if you asked him?"

"You really think so?" The girl began to preen. "Well, maybe —"

"A pretty girl like you, a fellow like him, nothing to maybe about. What a man like Mr. Mead can't accomplish, a woman has to do all the time. And a pretty girl like you can do it without lifting her little finger."

Mary Ann Carthington gave a nod of agreement to this female view of history and stood up with determination. Dave Pollock immediately called for a jumper. She stepped back as the great cylinder materialized in the room.

"Do I *have* to?" she asked. "Those awful things, they're so *upsetting*."

HE TOOK her arm and began working her under the jumper with a series of gentle, urging tugs. "You can't walk; we don't have the time any more. Take my word, Mary Ann, this is D-day and H-hour. So be a good girl and get under there and — Hey, listen. A smart angle with the temporal supervisor might be about how his people will be stuck in our period if Winthrop goes on being stubborn. If anyone around here is responsible for them, he is. So as soon as you get there —"

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"I don't need you to tell me how to handle the temporal supervisor, Dave Pollock!" she said haughtily, flouncing under the jumper. "After all, he happens to be a friend of mine, not yours — a very *good* friend of mine!"

"Sure," Pollock groaned, "but you still have to convince the man. And all I'm suggesting —" He broke off as the cylinder slid the final distance down to the floor and disappeared with the girl inside.

He turned back to the others who had been watching anxiously. "Well, that's it," he announced, flapping his arms with a broad, hopeless gesture. "That's our very last hope. Her!"

Mary Ann Carthington felt exactly like a Last Hope as she materialized in the Temporal Embassy.

She fought down the swimming nausea which always seemed to accompany jumper transportation and, shaking her head quickly, managed to draw a deep breath.

As a means of getting places, the jumper certainly beat Edgar Rapp's old Buick—if only it didn't make you feel like a chocolate malted. That was the trouble with this era: every halfway nice thing in it had such unpleasant aftereffects!

The ceiling undulated over her head in the great rotunda where she was now standing and bulged a huge purplish lump down at her. It still looked, she decided nervously, like a movie house chandelier about to fall.

"Yes?" inquired the purplish lump politely. "Whom did you wish to see?"

She moistened her lipstick, then squared her shoulders. You had to carry these things off with a certain amount of poise; it just did not do to show nervousness before a ceiling.

"I came to see Gygyo — I mean is Mr. Gygyo Rablin in?"

"Mr. Rablin is not at size at the moment. He will return in fifteen minutes. Would you like to wait in his office? He has another visitor there."

MARY ANN CARTHINGTON thought swiftly. She didn't entirely like the idea of another visitor, but maybe it would be for the best. The presence of a third party would be a restraining influence for both of them and would take a little of the inevitable edge off her coming back to Gygyo as a suppliant after what had happened between them.

But what was this about his not being "at size"? These twenty-fifth-century people did so many positively weird things with themselves!

"Yes, I'll wait in his office," she told the ceiling. "Oh, you needn't bother," she said to the floor as it

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gan to ripple under her feet. "I know the way."

"No bother at all, miss," the floor replied cheerfully, and continued to carry her across the rotunda to Rablin's private office. "It's a pleasure."

Mary Ann sighed and shook her head. Some of these fixtures were so *opinionated!* She relaxed and let herself be carried along, taking out her compact on the way for a last quick check of her hair and face.

But the glance at herself in the mirror evoked the memory again. She flushed and almost called for a jumper to take her back to Mrs. Brucks' room. No, she couldn't — this was their last chance to get out of this world and back to their own. But *damn* Gygyo Rablin, anyway!

A yellow square in the wall having dilated sufficiently, the floor carried her into Rablin's private office and lay flat again. She looked around at the familiar surroundings.

There was Gygyo's desk, if you could call that odd, purring thing a desk. There was that peculiar squirmy couch that —

She caught her breath. A young woman was lying on the couch, one of those horrible bald-headed women they had here.

"Excuse me," Mary Ann said in one fast breath. "I had no idea — I didn't mean to —"

"That's perfectly all right," the young woman said, still apparently staring up at the ceiling. "You're not intruding. I just dropped in on Gygyo myself. Have a seat."

The floor shot up a section of itself under Mary Ann and, when she was securely cradled in it, lowered itself slowly to sitting height.

"You must be that twentieth century —" the young woman paused, then amended rapidly, "the *visitor* whom Gygyo has been seeing lately. My name's Flurett. I'm just an old childhood friend — way back from Responsibility Group Three."

Mary Ann nodded primly. "How nice, I'm sure. My name is Mary Ann Carthington. And really, if in any way I'm —"

"I told you it's all right. Gygyo and I don't mean a thing to each other. This Temporal Embassy work has dulled his taste for the everyday female; they've either got to be atavisms or precursors. I'm awaiting transformation — *major* transformation —so you couldn't expect very strong feelings from my side, now could you? So let's just say hello and go on from there."

FLUREET flexed her arm in what Mary Ann recognized disdainfully as the standard greeting gesture. Such women! It made

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them look like a man showing off his muscle.

"The ceiling said," Mary Ann began uncertainly, "that Gyg — Mr. Rablin isn't at size at the moment. Is that like what we call not being at home?"

"In a sense," said the bald girl. "He's in this room, but he's hardly large enough to talk to. Gygyo's size right now is — let me think, what did he say he was setting it for? — oh, yes, 35 microns. He's inside a drop of water in the field of that microscope to your left."

Mary Ann swung around and considered the spherical black object resting on a table against the wall. Outside of the two eyepieces set flush with the surface, it had little in common with pictures of microscopes she had seen in magazines.

"In — in *there?* What's he doing in there?"

"He's on a micro-hunt. You should know your Gygyo by now. An absolutely incurable romantic. Who goes on micro-hunts any more? And in a culture of intestinal amebae, of all things. Killing the beasties by hand instead of by routine psycho- or even chemotherapy appeals to his dashing soul. 'Grow up, Gygyo,' I said to him. 'These games are for children and for Responsibility Group Four children at that.' Well, that hurt his pride and he said he was going in with a fifteen-minute lock. A fifteen-minute *lock!* W[illegible] I heard that, I decided to come here and watch the battle, just in case."

"Why? Is a fifteen-minute lock dangerous?" Mary Ann asked. Her face was tightly set, however; she was still thinking of that "you should know your Gygyo" remark. That was another thing about this world she didn't like. With all their talk of privacy and the sacred rights of the individual, men like Gygyo didn't think twice of telling the most intimate matters about people to — to other people.

"Figure it out for yourself. Gygyo's set himself for 35 microns. That's about twice the size of most of the intestinal parasites he'll have to fight — amebae like *Endolimax nana, Iodamoeba butschlii* and *Dientamoeba fragilis.* But suppose he runs into a crowd of *Endamoeba colii,* to say nothing of our tropical dysentery friend, *Endamoeba hystolytica* — what then?"

"What then?" the blonde girl echoed. She had not the slightest idea. One did not face problems like this in San Francisco.

"Trouble, that's what. Serious trouble. The *colii* might be as large as he is, and *hystolyticae* run even bigger — 36, 37 microns, sometimes more. Now the most important factor on a micro-hunt is size, especially if you're fool

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ugh to limit your arsenal to a conventional sword and won't be seen carrying an automatic weapon even as insurance. Well, under those circumstances, if you lock yourself down to smallness so that you can't get out and nobody can *take* you out for a full fifteen minutes, you're just asking for trouble. And trouble is exactly what our boy is having!"

"He is? I mean is it bad?"

THE other girl gestured at the microscope. "Have a look. I've adjusted my retina to the magnification, but you people aren't up to that yet, I believe. You need mechanical aids for every little thing. Go ahead, have a look. That's *Dientamoeba fragilis* he's fighting now. Small, but fast. And very, very vicious."

Mary Ann hurried to the spherical microscope and stared intently through the eyepieces.

There, in the very center of the field, was Gygyo. A transparent bubble helmet covered his head and he was wearing some sort of thick but flexible one-piece garment over the rest of his body. About a dozen amebae, the apparent size of dogs, swarmed about, reaching for him with blunt, glassy pseudopods. He hacked away at them with a great two-handed sword in tremendous sweeps that cut in two the most venturesome and persistent of the creatures. But Mary Ann could see from his frantic breathing that he was getting tired. Every once in a while, he glanced rapidly over his left shoulder as if keeping watch on something in the distance.

"Where does he get air from?" she asked.

"The suit always contains enough oxygen for the duration of the lock," Flureet's voice explained behind her, sounding somewhat surprised at the question. "He has about five minutes to go, and I think he'll make it. He'll probably be shaken up enough, though, to — Did you see *that?*"

Mary Ann gasped. An elongated, spindle-shaped creature which ended in a thrashing whiplike streak had just darted across the field, well over Gygyo's head. It was half again his size. He had gone into a crouch as it passed and the amebae surrounding him had also leaped away. They were back at the attack in a moment, however, once the danger had passed. Very wearily now, he continued to chop at them.

"What *was* it?"

"A trypanosome. It went by too fast for me to identify it, but it looked like either *Trypanosoma gambiense* or *rhodesiense* — the African sleeping sickness protozoans. No, it was a bit too big to be either of them, now that I re-

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member. It could have been — Oh, the fool!"

Mary Ann turned to her, genuinely frightened. "What did he do?"

"He neglected to get a pure culture, that's what. Taking on several different kinds of intestinal amebae is wild enough, but if there are trypanosomes in there with him, then there might be anything! And him down to 35 microns!"

REMEMBERING the worried glances that Gygyo had thrown over his shoulder, Mary Ann swung back to the microscope. The man was still fighting desperately, but the strokes of the sword came much more slowly. Suddenly another ameba, different from those attacking Gygyo, swam into the field. It was almost transparent and about half his size.

"That's a new one," she told Flureet. "Is it dangerous?"

'No, *Iodamoeba butschlii* is just a sluggish, friendly lump. But what in the world is Gygyo afraid of to his left? He keeps turning his head as if — *Oh.*"

The last exclamation came out almost as a simple comment, so completely was it weighted with despair. An oval monster — its length three times and its width fully twice Gygyo's height — shot into the field from the left boundary as if making a stage entra[illegible] in reply to her question. The tiny hairlike appendages with which it was covered seemed to give it fantastic speed.

Gygyo's sword slashed at it, but it swerved aside and out of the field. It was back in a moment, coming down like a dive bomber. Gygyo and his other attackers leaped away, but one of the amebae was a little too slow. It disappeared, struggling madly, down the funnel-shaped mouth which indented the forward end of the egg-shaped horror.

"Balantidium coli," Flureet explained, "100 microns long, 65 microns wide. Fast and deadly and terribly hungry. I was afraid he'd hit something like this sooner or later. Well, that's the end of our micro-hunting friend. He'll never be able to avoid it long enough to get out. And he can't kill a bug that size."

"Can't you *do* something?" Mary Ann pleaded shakily.

The bald woman brought her eyes down from the ceiling at last. Making what seemed an intense effort, she focused them on the girl. They were lit with bright astonishment.

"What can I do? He's locked inside that culture for another four minutes. Do you expect me to go in there and *rescue* him?"

"If you can — of course!"

"But that would be interfering

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[redacted]th his sovereign rights as an individual! My dear girl, even if his wish to destroy himself is unconscious, it is still a wish originating in an essential part of his personality and must be respected. The whole thing is covered by the Subsidiary Rights Covenant of —"

"How do you *know* he wants to destroy himself?" Mary Ann wept. "I never heard of such a thing! He's supposed to be a — a friend of yours! Maybe he just accidentally got himself into more trouble than he expected and he can't get out. I'm positive that's what happened. Oh—poor Gygyo, while we're standing here talking, he's getting *killed!*"

FLUREET considered. "You may have a legitimate argument. He *is* a romantic and associating with you has given him all sorts of swaggering adventuresome notions. He'd never have done anything as risky as this before. But tell me: do you think it's worth taking a chance of interfering with sovereign individual rights, just to save the life of an old and dear friend?"

"I don't *understand* you," Mary Ann said helplessly. "Of *course!* Why don't you let me — just do whatever you have to and send me in there after him. *Please!*"

The other woman rose and shook her head. "No, I think I'd be more effective. I must say this romanticism is catching. And," she laughed to herself, "just a little intriguing. You people in the twentieth century led such lives!"

She turned some switch and shrank down swiftly. Just as she disappeared, there was a whispering movement, like a flame curving from a candle, and her body seemed to streak toward the microscope.

Gygyo was down on one knee now, trying to present as small a target to the oval monster as possible. The amebae had either all fled or been swallowed. He was swinging the sword back and forth rapidly over his head as the *Balantidium coli* swooped down first on one side, then on the other, but he looked very tired. His lips were clenched together, his eyes squinting with desperation.

And then the huge creature came straight down, feinted with its body, and, as he lunged at it with the sword, swerved slightly and hit him from the rear. Gygyo fell, losing his weapon.

Hairy appendages churning, the monster spun around so that its funnel-shaped mouth was in front and came streaking back for the kill.

An enormous hand, a hand the size of Gygyo's whole body, swung into view and knocked the beast to one side. Gygyo scrambled to his feet, regained the sword and

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looked up unbelievingly. He exhaled with relief and then smiled. Flureet had evidently stopped her shrinkage at a size several times larger than a hundred microns. Her body was not visible in the microscope to Mary Ann, but it was obviously far too visible to the *Balantidium coli,* which turned and scudded away.

And for the remaining minutes of the lock, there was not a creature which seemed even vaguely inclined to wander into Gygyo's neighborhood.

To Mary Ann's astonishment, Flureet's first words to Gygyo when they reappeared beside her at their full height were an apology: "I'm truly sorry, but your fire-eating friend here got me all excited about your safety, Gygyo. If you want to bring me up on charges of violating the Covenant and interfering with an individual's carefully prepared plans for self-destruction —"

GYGYO waved her to silence. "Forget it. In the words of the past: Covenant, Shmovenant. You saved my life and, as far as I know, I wanted it saved. If I started proceedings against you for interfering with my unconscious, in all fairness we'd have to subpoena my conscious mind as a witness in your defense. The case could drag on for months and I'm far too busy."

"You're right," the bald woman agreed. "There's nothing like a schizoid lawsuit when it comes to complications and verbal quibbling. But all the same, I'm grateful to you — I didn't *have* to go and save your life. I don't know quite what got into me."

"That's what got into you." Gygyo gestured at Mary Ann. "The century of regimentation, of total war, of massive meddling. I know: it's contagious."

Mary Ann exploded. "Well, really! I never in my life — I just can't believe it! First she doesn't want to save your life, because it would be interfering with your unconscious — your *unconscious!* Then, when she finally does something about it, she apologizes to you — she *apologizes!* And instead of thanking her, you talk as if you're excusing her for — for committing assault and battery! And then you start insulting *me* and —"

"I'm sorry," Gygyo said. "I didn't intend to insult you, Mary Ann, neither you nor your century. After all, we must remember that it was the first century of modern times, the crisis-sickness from which recovery began. And it was in very many ways a truly great and adventuresome period in which Man, for the last time, dared things which he has never since attempted."

"Well. In that case." Mary Ann

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swallowed and began to feel better. And at that moment, she saw Gygyo and Flureet exchange the barest hint of a smile. She stopped feeling better. Damn these people! Who did they think they were?

Flureet moved to the yellow square exit. "I just stopped in to say good-by before my transformation. Wish me luck, Gygyo."

"Your transformation? So soon? Well, all the best, of course. It's been good knowing you, Flureet."

When the woman had left, Mary Ann looked at Gygyo's deeply concerned face and asked hesitantly: "What does she mean —'transformation'? And she said it was a *major* transformation. What's she talking about?"

The dark-haired young man studied the wall for a moment. "I'd better not," he said at last, mostly to himself. "That's one of the concepts you'd find upsetting, like our active food, for instance. And speaking of food, I'm hungry. Hungry, do you hear? *Hungry!*"

A SECTION of the wall shook violently as his voice rose. It protruded an arm of itself at him. A tray was balanced on the end of the arm. Still standing, Gygyo began to eat from the tray.

He didn't offer Mary Ann any, which, as far as she was concerned, was just as well. She had seen at a glance that it was the purple spaghettilike stuff of which he was so terribly fond.

Maybe it tasted good. Maybe it didn't. She'd never know. She only knew that she could never bring herself to eat anything which writhed up toward one's mouth and wriggled about cozily once it was inside.

That was another thing about this world. The things these people *ate!*

Gygyo glanced up and saw her face. "I wish you'd try it just once, Mary Ann," he said wistfully. "It would add a whole new dimension to food for you. In addition to flavor, texture and aroma, you'd experience *motility*. Think of it: food not just lying there limp and lifeless in your mouth, but food expressing eloquently its desire to be eaten. Even your friend Winthrop, culinary esthete that he is, admitted to me the other day that Centaurian *libal* has it all over his favorite food symphonies in many ways. You see, they can adjust their flavor to the dietary wishes of the person consuming them. That way, you get—"

"*Please!* It makes me absolutely and completely sick even to think of it."

"All right." He finished eating, nodded at the wall, which withdrew the arm and sucked the tray back into itself. "I give up. All I wanted was to have you sample the stuff before you left."

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"Leaving — that's what I came to see you about. We're having trouble."

"I was hoping you'd come to see me for myself alone," he said with a disconsolate droop of his head.

She couldn't tell whether he was being funny or serious, so she got angry as the easiest way of handling the situation. "See here, Gygyo Rablin, you are the very last man on Earth — past, present or future — that I ever want to see again. And you know why! Any man who — who says things to a girl like you s-said to m-me, and at s-such a t-time . . ."

Against her will, and to her extreme annoyance, her voice broke. Tears tickled their way down her face. She set her lips determinedly and tried to shake them away.

GYGYO looked really uncomfortable now. He sat down on a corner of the desk, which twitched under him more erratically than ever.

"I am sorry, Mary Ann. Truly, terribly, sincerely sorry. I should never have made love to you in the first place. Even without our substantial temporal and cultural differences, I'm certain you know as well as I do that we have precious little in common. But I found you — well, exciting like no woman in my own time, or any woman that I've ever encountered in a visit to the future. Bizarre — earthy — violently female. I just couldn't resist the attraction. The one thing I didn't anticipate was the depressing effect your peculiar cosmetics would have upon me. The actual tactile sensations were extremely upsetting."

"That's not what you said. And the *way* you said it! You rubbed your finger on my face and lips, and you went: *'Grea-sy! Grea-sy!'"* Thoroughly in control of herself now, she mimicked him viciously.

Gygyo shrugged. "I said I'm sorry and I meant it. But if you only knew how that stuff feels to a highly educated tactile sense! That smeary red lipstick — that tinted grit on your cheeks! There's no excuse for me, that I'll grant, but I'm just trying to make you understand why I erupted so stupidly."

"I suppose you think I'd be a lot nicer if I shaved my head like some of these women — like that horrible Flureet!"

He smiled and shook his head. "You couldn't be like them and they couldn't be like you. There are entirely different concepts of womanhood and beauty involved. In your period, the greatest emphasis is on a kind of physical similarity, whereas we place the accent on difference, but most particularly on *emotional* difference. The more emotions a woman can exhibit and the more

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[redacted]mplex they are, the more striking is she considered. That's the point of the shaved heads: to show suddenly appearing subtle wrinkles that might be missed if the area were covered with hair. We call Woman's bald head her Frowning Glory."

MARY ANN'S shoulders slumped and she stared down at the floor, which started to raise a section of itself questioningly, but sank down again as it realized that nothing was required of it. "I don't understand, and I guess I won't ever understand. All I know is that I just can't stay in the same world with you, Gygyo Rablin — the very thought of it makes me feel kind of all wrong and sick inside."

"I do understand," he said seriously. "And for whatever comfort it may be — you have the same effect on me. I'd never have done anything as supremely idiotic as going on a locked microhunt in an impure culture before I met you. But those exciting stories of your adventuresome friend Edgar Rapp finally crept under my skin. I found I had to prove myself a man in your terms, Mary Ann — in *your* terms!"

"Edgar Rapp?" She looked at him incredulously. "Adventuresome? Exciting? *Edgar?* The only time *he* ever gets close to sport is when he sits on his behind all night playing poker with the boys in the payroll department!"

Gygyo rose and barged around the room aimlessly, shaking his head. "The casual, half-contemptuous way you say it! The constant psychic risks run, the inevitably recurring clashes of personality — subliminal and overt — as hand after hand is played, as hour after hour goes by, with not two, not three, but as many as five, six or even seven different and highly aggressive human beings involved — the bluffs, the raises, the outwitting, the fantastic rugged contest of it! There is not a man in my entire world who'd be able to stand up to fifteen minutes of such complex psychological punishment — yet, to you, it's almost nothing!"

Her gaze was very soft and tender as she watched him knock unhappily about the room. "And that's why you went into that awful microscope, Gygyo? To prove that you could be as good a man as Edgar is when he's playing poker?"

"It's not just the poker. That's hair-raising enough, I grant you. It's so many things. Take this used car that he drives you around in. Any man who'd drive one of those clumsy, unpredictable power-plants through the kind of traffic and the kind of accident statistics that your world boasts — *and every day, as a matter of course!*

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I knew the micro-hunt was a pathetic, artificial affair, but it was the only thing available that even came close!"

"You don't have to prove anything to me, Gygyo."

"Maybe I don't," he brooded. "But I had reached the point where I had to prove it to myself. Which is quite silly when you come to think of it, but that doesn't make it any less real. And I proved something, after all. That two people with entirely different standards for male and female don't have a chance, no matter how attractive they find each other. I can't live with my knowledge of your innate standards, and you — well, you certainly have found mine upsetting. We don't mesh, we don't resonate, we don't *go*. As you said before, we shouldn't be in the same world. That's doubly true ever since — since we found out how strongly we tend to come together."

SHE nodded. "I know. The way you stopped making love to me and — and said — that horrid word, the way you kind of shuddered when you wiped your lips— Gygyo, it tore me absolutely and completely to bits. I knew right then I had to get out of your time forever. But with Winthrop acting the way he is — I don't know what to do!"

"Tell me about it." He seemed to make an effort to pull himself together as he sat beside her on a section of upraised floor.

By the time she had finished, his recovery was complete. Dismayed, Mary Ann watched him become once more a highly urbane, extremely intelligent and slightly supercilious young man of the twenty-fifth century, and felt in her very bone marrow her own awkwardness increase, her garish, none-too-bright primitiveness come thickly to the surface.

"I can't do a thing for you," he said. "I wish I could."

"Not even," she asked desperately, "with the problems you and I have? Not even considering how terrible it'll be if I stay here, if I don't leave on time?"

"Not even considering all that. I doubt that I could make it clear to you, however much if I tried, but I can't force Winthrop to go, I can't in all conscience give you any advice on how to force him, and I can't think of a thing that would make him change his mind. You see, there's a whole social fabric involved which is far more significant than our personal little agonies, however important they may be to us. In my world, as Storku pointed out, one just doesn't do such things. And that, my sweet, is that."

Mary Ann sat back. She hadn't needed the slightly mocking tone of Gygyo's last words to tell her

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that he was now completely in control of himself, that once more he was looking upon her as an intriguing but — culturally speaking — extremely distant specimen.

She knew only too well what was happening: she'd been on the other end of this kind of situation once or twice herself. Just two months ago, a smooth salesman who handled the Nevada territory for her company had taken her out on a date and almost swept her off her feet. Just as she'd reached the point where the wine in her brain was filled with bubbles of starlight, she'd taken out a cigarette and dreamily, helplessly, asked him for a light. The salesman had clicked a lighter at her in an assured and lordly gesture, but the lighter had failed to work. He had cursed, clicked it futilely a few more times, then had begun picking at the mechanism madly with his fingernails.

IN THE next few moments, as he continued to claw at the lighter, it had seemed to Mary Ann that the glossy surface of his personality developed an enormous fissure along its entire length and all the underlying desperation that was essentially him leaked out. He was no longer a glamorous, successful and warmly persuasive young man, but a pathetically driven creature who was overpoweringly uncertain, afraid that if one item in his carefully prepared presentation missed its place on the schedule, the sale would not take place.

And it didn't. When he'd looked at her again, he saw the cool comprehension in her eyes. His lips sagged. And no matter how he tried to recapture the situation, how cleverly he talked, how many oceans of sparkling urgency he washed over her, she was his master now. She had seen through his magic to the unhooded yellow light bulbs which made it work.

She remembered feeling somewhat sorry for him as she'd asked him to take her home — not sorrow for someone with whom she'd almost fallen in love, but slight sorrow for a handicapped child (someone else's handicapped child) who had tried to do something utterly beyond his ability.

Was that what Gygyo was feeling for her now? With brimming anger and despair, Mary Ann felt she had to reach him again, reach him very personally. She had to wipe off that smile of his.

"Of course," she said, selecting the first weapon that came to hand, "it won't do *you* any good if Winthrop doesn't go back with us."

He looked at her questioningly. "Me?"

"Well, if Winthrop doesn't go back, we'll be stuck here. And if we're stuck here, the people from

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your time who are visiting ours will be stuck in the twentieth century. You're the temporal supervisor — you might get fired from your job."

"My dear little Mary Ann! Getting fired — what a concept! Next you'll be telling me I'm liable to have my ears cropped!"

To her chagrin, he chuckled all over.

"Don't you even *feel* responsible? Don't you feel *anything?*"

"Well, whatever I feel, it certainly isn't responsibility. The five people from this century who volunteered to make the trip back to yours were well-educated, extremely alert, highly responsible human beings. They knew they were running risks."

SHE rose agitatedly. "But how were they to know that Winthrop was going to be stubborn? And how could *we* know that?"

"Even assuming that the possibility entered nobody's mind," he pointed out, tugging at her arm gently until she sat down beside him again, "one has to admit, in all reason, that transferring to a period five centuries away must be accompanied by certain dangers. Not being able to return is one of them. Then one has to further admit that, this being so, one or more of the people making the transfer recognized this danger and — at least unconsciously — wished to subject themselves to its consequences. If that is at all the situation, interference would be a major crime, not only against Winthrop's conscious desires, but against such people's unconscious motivations as well — and both have almost equal weight in the ethics of our period. That's about as simple as I can make it, Mary Ann. Do you understand now?"

"A — a little," she confessed. "You mean it's like Flureet not wanting to save you when you were almost being killed in that micro-hunt, because maybe, unconsciously, you *wanted* to get yourself killed?"

"Right! And believe me, Flureet wouldn't have lifted a finger, old friend or no old friend, your romantic twentieth-century dither notwithstanding, if she hadn't been on the verge of major transformation, with the concurrent psychological remove from all normal standards and present-day human frames of reference."

"What *is* this major transformation business?"

Gygyo shook his head emphatically. "Don't ask me that. It's a concept and a practice as peculiar to our time as — oh, say, tabloid journalism and election-night excitement are to yours. What you want to appreciate is this other thing — the way we protect and *nurture* the individual eccentric impulse, even if it should be

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suicidal. Let me put it this way. The French Revolution tried to sum itself up in the slogan, *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité;* the American Revolution used the phrase, Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

"We feel that the entire essence of our civilization is contained in these words: The Utter Sacredness of the Individual and the Individual Eccentric Impulse. The last part is the most important, because without it our society would have as much right to interfere with the individual as yours did. A man wouldn't even have the elementary freedom of doing away himself without first getting the proper papers filled out by the proper government official. A person who wanted to —"

MARY ANN stood up with determination. "All right! I'm not the least little bit interested in this nonsense. You won't help us in any way, you don't care if we're stuck here for the rest of our natural lives, and that's that! I might as well go."

"In the name of the Covenant, girl, what did you *expect* me to tell you? I'm no Oracle Machine. I'm just a man."

"A man?" she cried scornfully. "You call yourself a man? Why, a man would — a real-man would just — Oh, let me get out of here!"

The dark-haired young man shrugged and rose, too. He called for a jumper. When it materialized beside them, he gestured toward it courteously. Mary Ann started for it, paused, then held out a hand to him.

"Gygyo," she said, "whether we stay or leave on time, I'm never going to see you again. I've made up my mind on that. But there's one thing I want you to know."

As if realizing what she was going to say, he had dropped his eyes. His head was bent over the hand he had taken.

Seeing this, Mary Ann felt her voice grow gentler and more tender. "It's just — just that — oh, Gygyo, it's that you're the only man I've ever loved. Ever really, truly, absolutely and completely loved. I want you to know that, Gygyo."

He didn't reply. He was still holding her fingers tightly and she couldn't see his eyes.

"Gygyo," she said, her voice breaking. "You're feeling the same, aren't —"

He looked up. There was an expression of puzzlement on his face. He pointed to the fingers he had been holding. Each nail was colored with a bright, recently applied lacquer.

"Why in the world," he asked, "do you limit it to the fingernail? Most primitive peoples did it on larger parts of the body. One

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would expect that at least you would tattoo the whole hand — Mary Ann! Did I say anything wrong again?"

Sobbing bitterly, the girl darted past him and into the jumper.

She went back to Mrs. Brucks' room, and, when she had been calmed sufficiently, explained why Gygyo Rablin, the temporal supervisor, either could not or would not help them with Winthrop's stubbornness.

DAVE POLLOCK glared around the oval room. "So we give up? Is that what it comes to? Not one person in all this brilliant, gimmicky, gadgety future will lift a finger to help us get back to our own time and our own families — and we can't help ourselves. A brave new world, all right. Real achievement. Real progress."

"I don't see what call you have to shoot your mouth off, young man," Mr. Mead growled from where he was sitting at the far end of the room. Periodically, his necktie curled upward and tried to nuzzle against his lips; wearily, petulantly, he slapped it down again. "At least *we* tried to do something about it. That's more than you can say."

"Ollie, old boy, I may not pay a whopping income tax, but I've been trained to use my mind. I'd like nothing better than to find out what a thoroughly rational approach to this problem could do for us. One thing I know — it can't possibly come up with less than all this hysteria and emotional hoopla, this executive-type strutting have managed to date."

"Listen, a difference it makes?" Mrs. Brucks held her wrist out and pointed to the tiny gold-plated watch strapped around it. "Only forty-five minutes left before six o'clock. So what can we do in forty-five minutes? A miracle maybe we can manufacture on short notice? Magic we can turn out to order? Go fight City Hall. My Sammy I know I won't see again."

The thin young man turned on her angrily. "I'm not talking of magic and miracles. I'm talking of logic. Logic and the proper evaluation of data. These people not only have a historical record available to them that extends back to and includes our own time, but they are in regular touch with the future — their future. That means there are also historical records that extend back to and include *their* time."

Mrs. Brucks cheered up perceptibly. She liked listening to education. "So?"

"Isn't it obvious? Those five people who exchanged with us must have known in advance that Winthrop was going to be stubborn. It stands to reason they

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wouldn't want to spend the rest of their lives in what is for them a pretty raw and uncivilized environment — unless they had known of a way out. It's up to us to find that way."

"Maybe," Mary Ann Carthington suggested, bravely biting the end off a sniffle, "maybe the next future kept it a secret from them. Or maybe all five of them were suffering from what they call here a bad case of individual eccentric impulse."

"That's not how the concept of individual eccentric impulse works. I don't want to go into it now, but *believe me*, that's not how it works! And I don't think the Temporal Embassies keep this kind of secret from the people in the period to which they're accredited. No, I tell you the solution is right here, if we can only see it."

OLIVER T. MEAD had been sitting with an intent expression on his face, as if he were trying to locate a fact hidden at the other end of a long tunnel of unhappiness. He straightened up suddenly and said: "Storku mentioned the Temporal Embassy! But he didn't think it was a good idea to approach them — they were too involved with long-range historical problems to be of any use to us. But something else he said — something else we could resort to. What was it now?"

They all waited anxiously while he thought. Dave Pollock had just begun a remark about "high-surtax memories" when the rotund executive smacked his thigh resoundingly.

"I remember! He said we could ask the Oracle Machine! We might have some difficulty interpreting the answer, according to him, but at this point that's the least of our worries. We're in a desperate emergency and beggars can't be choosers. If we get any kind of answer, any kind of answer at all —"

Mary Ann Carthington looked away from the little cosmetics laboratory she was using to repair the shiny damage caused by tears. "Now that you bring it up, Mr. Mead, the temporal supervisor made some such remark to me, too. About the Oracle Machine, I mean."

"He did? Good! That firms it up nicely. We may still have a chance. Well, then, as to who shall do it — I am certain I don't have to draw a diagram when it comes to selecting the one of us most capable of dealing with a complex piece of futuristic machinery."

They all stared at Dave Pollock, who swallowed hard and inquired hoarsely, "You mean me?"

"Certainly I mean you!" Mr.

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Mead said. "You're the long-haired scientific expert around here."

"I'm a teacher, that's all, a high-school science *teacher.* And you know how I feel about having anything to do with the Oracle Machine. As far as I'm concerned, it's the one aspect of this civilization that's most decadent. Why, I'd rather —"

"My stomach didn't turn over when I had to go in and have an argument with that crazy Mr. Winthrop?" Mrs. Brucks broke in. "I liked watching one minute a pair rompers, the next minute I don't know what, an evening gown he starts wearing? And that crazy talk — smell this from a Mars, taste this from a Venus — you think maybe, Mr. Pollock, I enjoyed myself? But somebody had to do, so I did. All we're asking you is a try. A try you can make."

"AND I can assure you," Mary Ann Carthington put in swiftly, "that Gygyo Rablin is absolutely and completely the last person on Earth I would go to for a favor. It's a personal matter and I'd rather not discuss it now, if you don't mind, but I would die, positively *die,* rather than go through that again. I did it, though, because there was the teensiest chance it would help us all get home again. I don't think we're asking too much of you. I don't think so one little bit."

Mr. Mead nodded. "I agree with you, young lady. Storku is a man I haven't seen eye to eye with since we've arrived and I've gone out of my way to avoid him, but to have to get involved in that unholy Shriek Field madness in the bargain —" He brooded for a while over some indigestible mental fragment, then, as his cleated golf shoes began wriggling about lovingly on his feet, shook himself determinedly and went on. "It's time you stopped shooting off your mouth, Pollock, and got down to plain brass tacks. Einstein's theory of relativity isn't going to get us back to good old 1958 and neither is your Ph.D. or M.A. or whatever. What we need now is action, action with a capital *A* and no ifs, no ands, no buts."

"All right, all right. I'll do it."

"And another thing." Mr. Mead rolled a wicked little thought pleasurably to and fro in his mind for a moment or two before letting it out. "You take the jumper. You said yourself we don't have the time to do any walking and that's doubly true right now, when we're *right up against the deadline.* I don't want to hear any whining and any whimpering about the jumper making you sick. If Miss Carthington and I could take it, so can you."

Dave Pollock rallied. "You think I won't? I've done most of

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my traveling here by jumper. I'm not afraid of mechanical progress — just so long as it's genuine *progress*. Of course I'll take the jumper."

He signaled for one with a microscopic return of his old swagger. When it appeared, he walked under it with shoulders squared. Let them all watch how a rational, science-minded man goes about things. And anyway, using the jumper wasn't nearly as upsetting to him as it seemed to be to the others. He could take jumpers in stride.

That was infinitely more than he could say for the Oracle Machine.

For that reason, he had himself deposited outside the building which housed the machine. A bit of a walk and he might be able to get his thoughts in order.

The only trouble was, the sidewalk had other ideas. Silently, obsequiously, but nonetheless firmly, it began to move under his feet as he started walking around the squat, slightly quivering structure. It rippled him ahead at a pace somewhat faster than the one he set, changing its direction as soon as he changed his.

POLLOCK looked around at the empty streets and shrugged with resignation. The sentient, eager-to-serve sidewalks didn't bother him, either. He had expected something like that in the future, that and the enormously alert servitor houses, the clothes which changed their color and cut at the wearer's caprice — all more or less, in one form or another, to be anticipated by a knowledgable man as human progress.

Even the development in food — from the wiggling please-eat-me-and-enjoy-me stuff all the way up to the more complex culinary compositions on which an interstellarly famous chef might have worked for a year or more — was logical, if you considered how bizarre, to an early American colonist, would be the fantastic, cosmopolitan variety of potables and packaged meals in any twentieth-century supermarket.

These things, the impedimenta of daily life, all change and modify in time. But *certain* things should not.

When the telegram had arrived in Houston, Texas, informing him that — of all the people in the United States of America — he was most similar to one of the prospective visitors from 2458 A.D., he had gone almost mad with joy. The celebrity he suddenly enjoyed in the faculty lunchroom was unimportant, as were the page-one stories in local newspapers under the heading: LONE STAR SON GALLOPING FUTUREWARD.

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First and foremost, it was reprieve — reprieve and another chance. Family responsibilities — a dying father and a sick younger sister — had prevented him from getting the advanced academic degrees necessary for a university teaching position, with all its accompanying prestige, higher income and opportunities for research. Then, when they had come to an end and he had gone back to school, a sudden infatuation and too-hasty marriage had thrown him back onto the same treadmill.

He had just begun to realize — despite the undergraduate promise he had shown and none-too-minute achievement — how thoroughly he was trapped by the pleasant residential neighborhood and cleanly modern high school between which he shuttled daily, when the telegram arrived, announcing his selection as one of the group to be sent five hundred years ahead. How it was going to help him, what, precisely, he would do with the chance, he did not know — but it had lifted him out of the ruck of anonymity. Somehow, someway, it would enable him to become a striking individual at last.

DAVE POLLOCK had not realized the extent of his good fortune until he met the other four in Washington, D. C. He had heard, of course, how the finest minds in the country had bitterly jostled and elbowed each other in a frenzied attempt to get into the group and find out what was going to develop in *their* specialty half a millenium hence. But not until he had talked with his prospective fellow-tourists — an itinerant worker, a Bronx housewife, a pompous Midwestern business executive, a pretty but very ordinary San Francisco stenographer — did it come to him that he alone had any amount of scientific training.

Only he would be capable of evaluating the amount of major technological advance! He would be the only one able to correlate all the bewildering mass of minor changes into something resembling coherence! And thus, above all, he would be the only one to appreciate the essential quality of the future, the basic threads that would run through it from its underlying social fabric to its star-leaping fringes!

He, who had wanted to devote his life to knowledge-seeking, would exist for two weeks, unique and intellectually alone, in a five-century-long extrapolation of every laboratory and library in his age!

At first, it *had* been like that. Everywhere there was glory and excitement and discovery. Then little disagreeable things began to

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creep in. The food, the clothing, the houses — well, you either ignored them or made other arrangements. These people were extremely hospitable and quite ingenious: they didn't at all mind providing you with more familiar meals when your stomach had revolted a couple of times. The women, with their glossy baldness and strange attitudes toward relations between the sexes — well, you had a brand-new wife at home and didn't have to get involved.

But Shriek Field and Panic Stadium — that was another matter. Dave Pollock was proud of being a thoroughly rational person. He had been proud of the future, when he first arrived, taking it almost as a personal vindication that the people in it should be so thoroughly, universally rational, too. His first acquaintance with Shriek Field had almost nauseated him. That the superb intellects he had come to know should *willingly* transform themselves into a frothing, hysterical pack of screaming animals and at regular, almost medically prescribed intervals . . .

They had explained to him elaborately that they could not be such superb intellects, so thoroughly rational, unless they periodically released themselves in this fashion. It made sense, but still *watching* them do it was downright horrifying! He knew he would never be able to stand the sight of it.

Yet one could make this acceptable in some corner of the brain. But the chess business?

SINCE his college days, Dave Pollock had fancied himself as a chess player. He was just good enough to be able to tell himself that if ever he had time to really concentrate on the game, he'd be good enough to play in tournaments. He'd even subscribed to a chess magazine and followed all the championship matches with great attention. He'd wondered what chess would be like in the future — surely the royal game, having survived for so many centuries, would survive another five? What would it be like: a version of three-dimensional chess, or possibly another, even more complex evolution?

The worst of it was that the game was practically identical with the one played in the twentieth century.

Almost every human being in 2458 played it; almost every human being in 2458 enjoyed it. But there were no human champions. There were no human opponents.

There were only the chess machines. And they could beat anybody.

"What's the sense," he had complained, "of playing with a ma-

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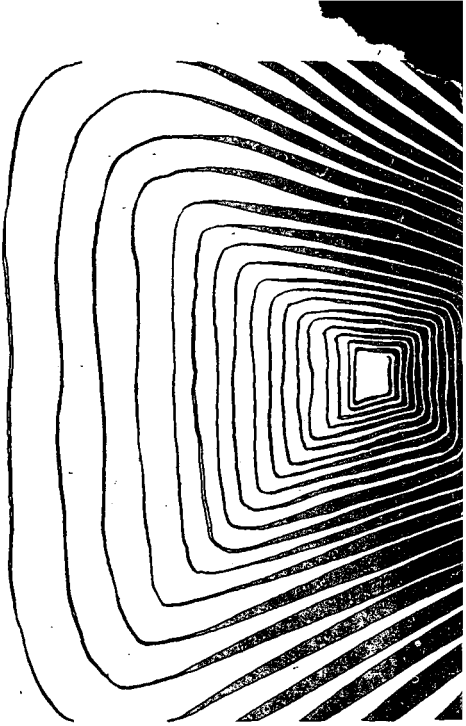
chine which has millions of 'best moves and counter-moves' built into its memory circuits? That has a selector mechanism able to examine and choose from every chess game ever recorded? A machine which has been *designed* never to be beaten? What's the sense – where's the excitement?"

"We don't play to win," he had been told wonderingly. "We play to play. It's the same with all our games: aggressions are gotten rid of in a Shriek or a Panic; games are just for mental or physical exercise. And so, when we play, we want to play against the best. Besides, every now and then, an outstandingly good player, once or twice in his lifetime, is able to hold the machine to a draw. Now *that* is an achievement. *That* merits excitement."

You had to love chess as much as he did, Dave Pollock supposed, to realize what an obscenity the existence of these machines made of it. Even the other three in his group, who had become much more restive than he at twenty-fifth-century mechanisms and mores, only stared at him blankly when he raged over it. No, if you didn't love something, you weren't bothered overmuch when it was degraded. But surely they could see the abdication of human intellect, of human reason, that the chess machines implied?

Of course, that was nothing



compared to the way human reason had abdicated before the Oracle Machine. That was the last straw to a rational person.

The Oracle Machine. He glanced at his watch. Only twenty-five minutes left. Better hurry. He took one last self-encouraging breath and climbed the cooperative steps of the building.

"My name is Stilia," a bald-headed, rather pleasant-faced young woman said as she came toward him in the spacious anteroom. "I'm the attendant of the machine for today. Can I help you?"

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"I suppose so." He looked uncomfortably at a distant, throbbing wall. Behind the yellow square on that wall, he knew, was the inner brain of the Oracle Machine. How he'd love to kick a hole in that brain!

INSTEAD, he sat down on an upraised hummock of floor and wiped his perspiring hands carefully. He told her about the approaching deadline, about Winthrop's stubbornness, about the decision to consult the Oracle Machine.

"Oh, Winthrop — yes! He's that delightful old man. I met him at a dream dispensary a week ago. What wonderful awareness he has! Such a total immersion in our culture! We're very proud of Winthrop. We'd like to help him every way we possibly can."

"If you don't mind," Dave Pollock said morosely, "we're the ones who need help. We've *got* to get back."

Stilia laughed. "Of course. We'd like to help everybody. But Winthrop is — *special*. He's trying hardest. Now if you'll just wait here, I'll go in and put your problem before the Oracle Machine."

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She flexed her right arm at him and walked toward the yellow square. Pollock watched it expand in front of her, then, as she went through the opening it made, contract behind her. In a few minutes, she returned.

"I'll tell you when to go in, Mr. Pollock. The machine is working on your problem. The answer you get will be the very best that can be made, given the facts available."

"Thanks." He mused for a while. "Tell me something. Doesn't it seem to take something vital out of life — out of your thinking life — to know that you can take absolutely any problem — personal problem, scientific problem or work problem — to the Oracle Machine and it will solve it much better than you could?"

Stilia looked puzzled. "Not at all. To begin with, problem-solving is a very small part of today's thinking life. It would be as logical to say that it took something vital out of life to make a hole with an electric drill instead of a hand gouge. In your time, no doubt, there are people who feel just that way; they have the obvious privilege of not using electric drills. Those who use electric drills, however, have their physical energy freed for tasks they regard as more important.

"The Oracle Machine is the major tool of our culture. It has been designed toward just one end — computing all the factors of a given problem and relating them to the totality of pertinent data that is in the possession of the human race. But even if people consult the Oracle Machine, they may not be able to understand and apply the answer. And if they do understand it, they may not choose to act on it."

"THEY may not choose to act on it?" Dave Pollock repeated incredulously. "Does that make sense? You said yourself the answers are the very best that can be made, given the facts available."

"Human activities don't necessarily have to make sense," she explained. "That is the prevailing and rather comfortable modern view, Mr. Pollock. There is always the individual eccentric impulse."

"Yeah, there's always that," he grumbled. "Resign your private personality by running with a howling mob at Shriek Field, lose all of yourself in an insane crowd — but don't forget your individual eccentric impulse. Never, *never* forget your individual eccentric impulse!"

She nodded soberly. "That really sums it up, in spite of your unmistakable sarcasm. Why do you find it so hard to accept? Man is both a herd animal and a

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highly individualistic animal — what we call a self-realizable animal. The herd instincts must be satisfied at whatever cost, and have been in the past through various forms of ingroup and outgroup activities. The need to resign one's personality and immerse in something larger than self has been recognized since earliest times: Shriek Fields and Panic Stadiums everywhere on the planet provide for this need and expend it harmlessly."

"I wouldn't say it was so harmless from the look of that mechanical rabbit, or whatever it was."

"I understand that human beings who took the place of the mechanical rabbit in the past looked much worse when a herd of men was through with them."

SHE locked eyes with him. "Yes, Mr. Pollock, I think you know what I mean. The self-realizable instincts, on the other hand, must be satisfied, too. Usually they can be satisfied in terms of one's daily life and work, as the herd instincts can be fulfilled by normal group relationships and identification with humanity. But occasionally the self-realizable instincts must be expressed at abnormal strengths and then we have to have a kind of private Shriek Field — the concept of individual eccentric impulse. The two are opposite poles of exactly the same thing. All we require is that another human being will not be actively interfered with."

"And so long as that doesn't happen, *anything* goes!"

"Exactly. Anything a person may want to do out of his own individual eccentric impulse is permitted. Encouraged, actually. It's not only that we believe some of humanity's greatest achievements to have come out of individual eccentric impulses, but that we feel the greatest glory of our civilization is the homage we pay to such intrinsically personal expression."

Dave Pollock stared at her with reluctant respect. She *was* bright. This was the kind of girl he might have married, if he'd gone on to his doctorate, instead of Susie. Although Susie — He wondered if he'd ever see Susie again. He was astonished at how bitterly homesick he felt.

"It sounds good," he admitted. "But living with it is another thing entirely. I guess I'm too much a product of my own culture to swallow it all the way. I can't get over how much difference there is between our civilizations. We talk the same language, but we sure as hell don't think the same thoughts."

Stilia smiled warmly and sat back. "One of the reasons your period was invited to exchange visitors with us is because it was

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the first in which most speech patterns became constant and language shifts came to an end. Your newly invented recording devices were responsible for that. But technological progress continued."

A hum began in the distant wall. Stilia broke off and stood up. "The Oracle Machine is ready to give you the answer to your problem. Just go inside, sit down and repeat your question in its simplest form. I wish you well."

I wish me well, too, Dave Pollock thought as he went through the dilated yellow square and into the tiny cube of a room. For all of Stilia's explication, he was supremely uncomfortable in this world of simply satisfied herd instincts and individual eccentric impulses. He was no misfit, no Winthrop — he very much wanted out and to return to what was familiar.

Above all, he didn't want to stay any longer in a world where almost any question he might think of would be answered best by the bluish, narrow, throbbing walls which surrounded him.

But — he did have a problem he couldn't solve. And this machine could.

HE SAT down. "What do we do about Winthrop's stubbornness?" he asked, feeling idiotically like a savage interrogating a handful of sacred bones.

A deep voice, neither masculine nor feminine in quality, rumbled from the four walls, from the ceiling, from the floor:

"You will go to the time-travel bureau in the Temporal Embassy at the proper time."

He waited.

Nothing more was forthcoming.

"It won't do us any good to be there," he pointed out finally. "Winthrop is stubborn; he won't go back with us. And unless all five of us go back together, none of us can go. That's the way the transferring device is set. So what I want to know is, how do we persuade Winthrop without—"

Again the enormous voice:

"You will go to the time-travel bureau in the Temporal Embassy at the proper time."

And that seemed to be that.

Dave Pollock trudged out and told Stilia what had happened.

"It seems to me," he commented a little nastily, "that the machine found the problem was just a bit too much for it and was trying hard to pass the buck to the Temporal Embassy."

"All the same, I would do what it advised. Unless, of course, you find another, subtler interpretation of the answer."

"Or unless my individual eccentric impulse gets in the way?"

This time the sarcasm was lost on her. She opened her eyes wide. "That would be best of all! Ima-

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gine if you should at last learn to exercise it!"

So Dave Pollock went back to Mrs. Brucks' room and, thoroughly exasperated, told the others of the ridiculous answer the Oracle Machine had given him on the problem of Winthrop's stubbornness.

AT a few minutes to six, however, all four of them — Mrs. Brucks, Oliver T. Mead, Mary Ann Carthington, Dave Pollock — were in the time-travel bureau of the Temporal Embassy, having arrived in varying stages of upset by way of jumper. They didn't have any particular hopes: there just wasn't anything else to do.

At precisely one minute to six, a large group of twenty-fifth-century citizens came in to the transfer room. Among them were Gygyo Rablin, the temporal supervisor; Stilia, the attendant of the Oracle Machine; Flureet, wearing the drawn look of one awaiting major transformation; Mr. Storku, returned temporarily from the Odor Festival on Venus — and many others. They carried Winthrop to his proper seat and stood back with reverent expressions on their faces.

The transfer began.

Winthrop was an old man — sixty-eight, to be exact. He had, in the past two weeks, undergone much excitement. He had been on micro-hunts, undersea hunts, teleport jaunts to incredibly distant planets, excursions numerous and fantastic.

He had had remarkable things done to his body, spectacular things done to his mind. He had pounded in pursuit at Shriek Field, scuttled fearfully at Panic Stadium. And, above all, he had eaten plentifully and repeatedly of foods grown in distant stellar systems, of dishes prepared by completely alien entities, of meals whose composition had been totally unsuspected by his metabolism. He had not grown up with these activities, with this food, as had the people of the twenty-fifth century.

Winthrop was no longer stubborn. Winthrop was dead.

— PHILIP KLASS

The Big News Next Month...

THE POD IN THE BARRIER

by Theodore Sturgeon

What is the wall in space? Why can't it be gone around, over, under or through? How is it that those kept out by the wall in space are the prisoners?

Don't miss this high-voltage Sturgeon novella!

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Blaze of Glory

By ROBERT SILVERBERG

I can't figure it: should Murchison be considered a hero — even if his motives were anything but heroic?

THEY list John Murchison as one of the great heroes of space — a brave man and true, who willingly sacrificed himself to save his ship. He won his immortality on the way back from Shaula II.

One thing's wrong, though. He was brave, but he wasn't willing. He wasn't the self-sacrificing type. I'm inclined to think it was murder — or maybe execution — by remote control, you might say.

I guess they pick spaceship crews at random, probably by yanking a handful of cards from the big computer and throwing them up at the BuSpace roof. The ones that stick get picked. At least, that's the only way a

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

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man like Murchison could have been sent to Shaula II in the first place.

MURCHISON was tall, bull-necked, coarse-featured, hard-swearing, a spaceman of a type that had never existed except in storytapes for the very young — the only kind Murchison was likely to have studied. He was our chief signal officer.

Somewhere, he had picked up an awesome technical competence; he could handle any sort of communication device with supernatural ease. I once saw him tinker with a complex little Caphian artifact that had been buried for half a million years and have it detecting the 21-centimeter "hydrogen song" within minutes. How he knew the little widget was a star-mapping device, I will never understand.

But coupled with Murchison's extraordinary special skill was an irascibility, flaring into seemingly unmotivated anger at unpredictable times, that made him a prime risk on a planet like Shaula II. There was something wrong with his emotional circuit-breaker, you could never tell when he'd overload, start fizzing and sparking, and blow off a couple of megawatts of temper.

You must admit this is not the ideal sort of man to send to a world whose inhabitants are listed in the Extraterrestrial Catalogue as *"wise, somewhat world-weary, exceedingly gentle, non-aggressive to an extreme degree and thus subject to exploitation. The Shaulans must be handled with great patience and forbearance, and should be given the respect due one of the Galaxy's elder races."*

I had never been to Shaula II, but I had a sharp mental image of the Shaulans: melancholy old men, pondering the whichness of the why, whom the first loud shout would drop in their tracks. So it caught me by surprise when the time came to affix my hancock to the roster of the *Felicific* and I saw o nthe line above mine the scribbled words *Murchison, John F., Chief Signal Officer.*

I signed my name — *Loeb, Ernest T., Second Officer* — picked up my pay voucher and walked away somewhat dizzily. I was thinking of the time I had seen Murchison, John F., giving a Denebolan frogman the beating of his life, for no particular reason at all.

"All the rain here makes me sick," was all Murchison cared to say; the frogman lived and Big Jawn got an X on his psych report.

Now he was shipping out for Shaula? Well, maybe so — but my faith in the computer that makes up spaceship complements was seriously shaken.

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OURS was the fourth or fifth expedition to Shaula II. The planet – second of seven in orbit around the brightest star in Scorpio's tail – was small and scrubby, but of great strategic importance as a lookout spot for that sector of the Galaxy. The natives hadn't minded our intrusion and so a military base had been established there with no preliminary haggling whatever.

The *Felicific* was a standard warp-conversion-drive ship holding thirty-six men. It had the usual crew of eight, plus a cargo of twenty-eight of Terra's finest, being sent out as replacements for the current staff of the base.

We blasted on 3 July 2530, a warmish day, made the conversion from ion-drive to warp-drive as soon as we were clear of the Solar System, and popped back into normal space three weeks later and two hundred light-years away. It was a routine trip in all respects.

With the warp-conversion drive, a ship is equipped to travel both long distances and short. It handles the long hops via subspace warp, and the short ones by good old standard ion-drive seat-of-the-spacesuit navigating. It's a good setup and the extra mass that the double drive requires is more than compensated for by the saving in time and maneuverability.

The warp-drive part of the trip was pre-plotted and just about pre-traveled for us; no headaches *there*. But when we blurped back into the continuum about half a light-year from Shaula, the human factor entered the situation. Meaning Murchison, of course.

It was his job to check and tend the network of telemetering systems that acted as the ship's eyes, to make sure the mass-detectors were operating, to smooth the bugs out of the communications channels between navigator and captain and drive-deck. In brief, he was the man who made it possible for us to land.

Every ship carried a spare signalman, just in case. In normal circumstances, the spare never got much work. When the time came for the landing, Captain Knight buzzed me and told me to start lining up the men who would take part. Naturally, I signaled Murchison first – he was our chief signal officer.

His voice was a slow rasping drawl. "Yeah?"

"Second Officer Loeb. Prepare for landing, double-fast. Navigator Henrich has the chart set up for you and he's waiting for your call."

There was a pause. Then: "I don't feel like it, Loeb."

I shut my eyes, held my breath and counted to three by fractions. Then I said, "Would you mind re-

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peating that, Mr. Murchison?"

"Hell, Loeb, I'm fixing something. Why do you want to land now?"

"I don't make up the schedules," I said.

"Then who in blazes does? Tell him I'm busy!"

I turned down my phone's volume.

"Busy doing what?"

"Busy doing nothing. Get off the line and I'll call Henrich."

I grunted and broke contact. He'd just been ragging me. Once again, Murchison had been ornery for the sheer sake of being ornery. One of these days, he was going to refuse to handle the landing entirely. And that day, I told myself, is the day we'll crate him up and shove him through the disposal lock.

Murchison had his skills and he applied them — when he felt like it. But only if he believed that he would profit. He never did anything unwillingly, because if he couldn't find it in himself to do it willingly, he wouldn't do it at all. It was impossible to *make* him do something.

Unwisely, we tolerated it. But someday he would get a captain who didn't understand him and he'd be slapped with a sentence of mutiny. For his sake, I hoped not. The penalty for mutiny in space is the same as it always has been — death.

WITH Murchison's cooperation gratefully accepted, we targeted on Shaula II, which was then at perihelion, and orbited in. Down in his little cubicle, Murchison worked like a demon, taking charge of the ship's landing system in a tremendous way. He was a fantastic signalman when he wanted to be.

Later that day, the spinning red ball that was Shaula II hung just ahead of us, close enough to let us see the three blobs of continents and the big, choppy hydrocarbon ocean that licked them smooth.

The Terran base on Continent Three beamed us a landing guide. Murchison picked it up, fed it through the computer bank to Navigator Henrichs and we homed in for the landing.

The Terran base consisted of a couple of blockhouses, a sprawling barracks and a good-sized radar parabola, all set in a ring out on an almost mathematically flat plain. Shaula II was a great world for plains; Columbus would have had the devil's time convincing people *this* world was round!

Murchison guided us to a glassy-looking area not far from the base and we touched down. The *Felicific* creaked and groaned a little as the landing-jacks absorbed its weight. Green lights went on all over the ship. We were free to go outside.

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A welcoming committee was on hand out there: eight members of the base staff, clad in shorts and topees. Regulation uniforms went by the board on oven-hot Shaula II. The eight looked awfully happy to see us.

Coming over the flat sandy plain from the base were a dozen or so others, running, and behind them I could see even more. They were understandably glad we were here. Twenty-eight of them had spent a full year on Shaula II; they were eligible for their parity-program year's vacation.

There were some other—things—moving toward us. They came slowly, with grace and dignity. I had expected to be impressed with the Shaulans and I was.

They were erect bipeds about four feet tall, with long thin arms dangling to their knees. Their gray skins were grainy and rough, and their dark eyes—they had three, arranged triangularly—were deep-set and brooding. A fleshy sort of cowl or cobra-hood curled up from their necks to shield their round hairless skulls. The aliens were six in number and even the youngest-looking of them seemed ancient.

A brown-faced young man wearing shorts, topee and tattooed stars stepped forward and said, "I'm General Gloster. I'm in charge here."

The captain acknowledged his greeting. "Knight of the *Felicific*. We have your relief men with us."

"I sure as hell hope you do," Gloster said. "Be kind of silly to come all this way without them."

We all laughed a little over that. By now, we were ringed in by at least fifty Earthmen, probably the entire base complement—we didn't rotate the entire base staff at once, of course—and the six aliens.

The twenty-eight youngsters we had ferried here were looking around the place curiously, apprehensive about this hot, dry, flat planet that would be their home for the next sidereal year.

The crew of the *Felicific* had gathered in a little knot near the ship. Most of them probably felt the way I did—glad we'd be on our way home in a couple of days.

Murchison was squinting at the six aliens. I wondered what he was thinking about.

THE bunch of us traipsed back the half mile or so to the settlement. Gloster walked with Knight and myself, prattling volubly about the progress the base was making, and the twenty-eight newcomers mingled with the twenty-eight who were being relieved. Murchison walked by himself, kicking up puffs of red dust and glowering in his usual man-

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her. The six aliens accompanied us at some distance.

"We keep building all the time," Gloster explained when we were within the compound. "Branching out, setting up new equipment, erecting new quarters, shoring up the old stuff. That radar parabola out there wasn't up last replacement trip."

I looked around. "The place looks fine, General." It was strange calling a man half my age *General,* but the Service sometimes works that way. "When do you plan to set up your telescope?"

"Next year, maybe." He glanced out the window at the featureless landscape. "We keep building all the time. Got to make something out of this planet. We're doing a damn fine job — never recognize the place in a couple of years."

"How about the natives?" the captain asked. "You have much contact with them?"

Gloster shrugged. "As much as they'll allow. They're a proud old race — only a handful of them left. But what a race they must have been once!"

I found Gloster's boyish enthusiasm discomforting. "Do you think we could meet one of the aliens before we go?" I asked.

"I'll see about it." Gloster picked up a phone. "McHenry? There any natives in the compound now? Good. Send him up, will you?"

Moments later, one of the shorts-clad men appeared, hand in hand with an alien. At close range, the Shaulan looked almost frighteningly old. A maze of wrinkles gullied its noseless face, running from the triple eyes down to the dots of nostrils to the sagging, heavy-lipped mouth.

"This is Azga," Gloster said. "Azga, meet Captain Knight and Second Officer Loeb of the *Felicific.*"

The creature offered a wobbly sort of bow and said in a deep, resonant, almost human croak, "I am very humble indeed in your presence, Captain Knight and Second Officer Loeb."

Azga straightened painfully from bowing and the three eyes fixed on mine. I felt like squirming, but I stared back. It was like looking into a mirror that gave the wrong reflection.

Yet there was something calm and wise and good about the grotesque creature, something relaxing and terribly fragile. The rough gray skin looked like precious leather, and the hood over the skull appeared to shield it from worry and harm. A faint musty odor wandered through the room.

We looked at each other — Knight and Gloster and McHenry and I — and we remained silent. Now that the Shaulan was here, what could we say? What

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new thing could we possibly tell the ancient creature?

I was fumbling for words to express my feeling when the sharp buzz of the phone cut across the uncomfortable silence.

Gloster nodded curtly to McHenry, who answered. The man listened for a moment. "Captain Knight, it's for you."

Puzzled, Knight took the receiver. He held it long enough to hear about three sentences and turned to me. "Loeb, commandeer a landcar from someone in the compound and get back to the ship. Murchison's tangling with one of the aliens."

I HOTFOOTED down into the compound and spotted an enlisted man tooling up his landcar. I pulled rank and requisitioned it, and minutes later I was parking it outside the *Felicific* and was clambering up the catwalk.

An excited-looking recruit stood at the open airlock.

"Where's Murchison?" I asked.

"Down in the communicator cabin, sir. He's got an alien in there with him. There's gonna be trouble."

I remembered Denebola and Murchison kicking the stuffings out of a groaning frogman. I groaned a little myself and dashed down the companionway.

The communications cabin was Murchison's inner sanctum, a cubicle off the astro deck where he worked and kept control over the *Felicific's* communications network.

I yanked open the door and saw him at the far end of the cabin, holding a massive crescent wrench and glaring at a Shaulan facing him. The Shaulan had its back to me. It looked small and squat and helpless.

Murchison saw me as I entered. "Get out of here, Loeb. This isn't your affair."

"What's going on here?" I snapped.

"This alien snooping around. I'm gonna let him have it with the wrench."

"I meant no harm," the alien boomed sadly. "Mere philosophical interest in your strange machines, nothing more. If I have offended a folkway of yours, I humbly apologize. It is not the way of my people to give offense."

I walked forward and took a position between them, making sure I wasn't within easy reach of Murchison's wrench. He was standing there with his nostrils spread, his eyes cold and hard, his breath pumping noisily. He was angry, and an angry Murchison was a frightening sight.

He took two heavy steps toward me. "I told you to get out. This is my cabin, Loeb. And neither you nor any aliens got any business in it."

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"Put down that wrench, Murchison. It's an order."

HE LAUGHED contemptuously. "Signal officers don't have to take orders from anyone but the captain if they think the safety of the ship is jeopardized. And I do. There's a dangerous alien in here."

"Be reasonable," I said. "This Shaulan's not dangerous. He only wanted to look around. Just curious."

The wrench wiggled warningly. I wished I had a blaster with me, but I hadn't thought of bringing a weapon. The alien faced Murchison quite calmly, as if confident the signalman would never strike anything so old and delicate.

"You'd better leave," I said to the alien.

"No!" Murchison roared. He shoved me to one side and went after the Shaulan.

The alien stood there, waiting, as Murchison came on. I tried to drag the big man away, but there was no stopping him.

At least he didn't use the wrench. He let it slip clangingly to the floor and slapped the alien open-handed across its face. The Shaulan backed up a few feet. A trickle of bluish fluid worked its way along its mouth.

Murchison raised his hand again. "Damned snooper! I'll teach you to poke in my cabin!" He hit the alien again.

This time the Shaulan folded up accordionwise and huddled on the floor. It focused those three deep solid-black eyes on Murchison reproachfully.

Murchison looked back. They stared at each other for a long moment, until it seemed that their eyes were linked by an invisible cord. Then Murchison looked away.

"Get out of here," he muttered.

The Shaulan rose and departed, limping a little, but still intact. Those aliens were more solid than they seemed.

"I guess you're going to put me in the brig," Murchison said to me. "Okay. I'll go quietly."

WE DIDN'T brig him, because there was nothing to be gained by that. He got the silent treatment instead. The men at the base would have nothing to do with him whatsoever because, in their year on Shaula, they had developed a respect for the aliens not far from worship, and any man who would actually use physical violence — well, he just wasn't worth wasting breath on.

The men of our crew gave him a wide berth, too. He wandered among us, a tall, powerful figure with anger and loneliness stamped on his face, and he said nothing to any of us and no one said any-

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thing to him. Whenever he saw one of the aliens, he went far out of his way to avoid a meeting.

Murchison got another X on his psych report, and that second X meant he'd never be allowed to visit any world inhabited by intelligent life again. It was a BuSpace regulation, one of the many they have for the purpose of locking the barn door too late.

Three days went by this way on Shaula. On the fourth, we took aboard the twenty-eight departing men, said good-by to Gloster and his staff and the twenty-eight we had ferried out to him, and — somewhat guiltily — good-by to the Shaulans, too.

The six of them showed up for our blastoff, including the somewhat battered one who had had the run-in with Murchison. They wished us well, gravely, without any sign of bitterness. For the hundredth time, I was astonished by their patience, their wisdom, their understanding.

I held Azga's rough hand in mine and finally managed to tell him what I had been wanting to say since our first meeting — how much I hoped we'd eventually reach the mental equilibrium and inner calm of the Shaulans. He smiled warmly at me and I said good-by again and entered the ship.

We ran the usual pre-blast checkups and got ready for departure. Communications was working well — Murchison had none of his usual grumbles and complaints — and we were off the ground in record time.

A couple of days of ion-drive, three weeks of warp, two more of ion-drive deceleration, and we would be back on Earth.

THE three weeks passed slowly, of course; when Earth lies ahead of you, time drags. But after the interminable grayness of warp came the sudden wrenching twist and the bright slippery *sliding* feeling as our Bohling generator threw us back into ordinary space.

I pushed down the communicator stud near my arm and heard the voice of Navigator Henrichs saying, "Murchison, give me the coordinates, will you?"

"Hold on," came Murchison's growl. "You'll get your coordinates as soon as I got 'em."

There was a pause; then Captain Knight said, "Murchison, what's holding up those coordinates? Where are we, anyway? Turn on the visiplates!"

"*Please,* Captain." Murchison's heavy voice was surprisingly polite. Then he ruined it. "Please be good enough to shut up and let a man think."

"Murchison —" Knight sputtered, and stopped. We all knew one solid fact about our signal-

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man: he did as he wanted. No one ever coerced him into anything.

So we waited, spinning end-over-end somewhere in the vicinity of Earth, completely blind behind our wall of metal. Until Murchison chose to feed us some data, we had no way of bringing the ship down.

Three more minutes went by. Then the private circuit Knight used when he wanted to talk to me alone lit up, and he said, "Loeb, go down to Communications and see what's holding Murchison up. We can't stay here forever."

I pocketed a blaster—I hate making mistakes more than once—and left my cabin. I walked to the companionway, turned to the left, hit the drophatch and found myself outside Murchison's door.

I knocked.

"Get away from here, Loeb!" Murchison bellowed from within.

I had forgotten that he had rigged a one-way vision circuit outside his door. I said, "Let me in, Murchison. Let me in or I'll blast out the lock."

I heard a heavy sigh and the whisper of the lock contracting. "Come on in, then."

Nervously I pushed the door open and poked my head and the blaster snout in, half expecting Murchison to leap on me from above. But he was sitting at an equipment-jammed desk, scribbling notes, which surprised me. I stood waiting for him to look up.

And finally he did. I gasped when I saw his face: drawn, harried, pale, tense. I had never seen an expression like that on Murchison's face before.

"What's going on?" I asked. "We're all waiting to get moving and—"

He turned to face me squarely. "You want to know what's going on, Loeb? Well, listen: the ship's blind. None of the equipment is reading anything. No telemeter pickup, no visual, no nothing. *You* scrape up some coordinates, if you can."

WE HELD a little meeting half an hour later, in the ship's Common Room. Murchison was there, and Knight, and myself, and Navigator Henrichs, and three representatives of the cargo.

"How did this happen?" Knight demanded.

Murchison shrugged. "It happened while we were in warp."

Knight glanced at Henrichs. "You ever hear of such a thing happening before?" He seemed to suspect Murchison of funny business.

But Henrichs shook his head. "No, Chief. And there's a good reason why, too. If this happens

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to a ship, the ship doesn't get back to tell about it."

Captain Knight looked gray-faced. He asked worriedly, "What could have caused this?"

"No one knows what subspace conditions are like," Henrichs said. "It may have been a fluke magnetic field, as Murchison suggests. Or anything at all. The question's not what did it, Captain – it's how do we get back."

"Murchison, is there any chance you can repair the instruments?"

"No."

"Just like that – flat *no?* Hell, man, we've seen you do wonders with instruments on the blink before."

"No," Murchison repeated stolidly. "I tried. I can't do a damned thing."

"That means we're finished, doesn't it?" asked Carney, one of our returnees. His voice was a little wild. "We might just as well have stayed on Shaula! At least we'd still be alive!"

"It looks pretty lousy," Henrichs admitted. The thin-faced navigator was frowning blackly. "We don't dare try a blind approach. There's nothing we can do. Nothing at all."

"There's *one* thing," Murchison said.

All eyes turned to him.

"What's that?" Knight asked.

"Put a man in a spacesuit and anchor him to the skin of the ship. Have him guide us in by voice – he'll be able to see, even if we can't."

"He'd incinerate once we hit Earth's atmosphere," I said. "We'd lose a man and still have to land blind."

Murchison puckered his thick lower lip. "You'll be able to judge the ship's height by hull temperature when you're that close. Besides, as soon as the ship's inside the ionosphere, you can use ordinary radio for the rest of the way down. The trick is to get *that* far."

"I think it's worth a try," Captain Knight said. "I guess we'll have to draw lots. Loeb, get some spaghetti from the galley to use as straws." His voice was grim.

"Never mind," Murchison said.

"How's that again?"

"I said never mind. Forget about drawing straws. I'll go."

"Murchison –"

"*Skip it!*" he barked. "It's a failure in my department, so I'm going to go out there. I volunteer, get it? If anyone else wants to, I'll wrestle him for it." He looked around at us. No one moved. "I don't hear any takers. I'll assume the job's mine." Sweat streamed down his face.

There was a startled silence, broken when Carney made the lousiest remark I've ever heard mortal man utter. "You're trying to make it up for hitting that defenseless Shaulan, eh, Murchison?

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Now you want to be a hero to even things up!"

But the big man only turned to Carney and said quietly, "You're just as blind as the others. You don't know how rotten those *defenseless* Shaulans are, any of you. Or what they did to us." He spat. "You all make me sick. I'm going out there."

He turned and walked away — out, to get into his spacesuit and climb onto the ship's skin.

MURCHISON'S explicit instructions, relayed from the outside of the ship, allowed Henrichs to bring us in. It was quite a feat of teamwork.

At 50,000 feet above Earth, Murchison's voice suddenly cut out. We were able to pick up ground-to-ship radio by then and we taxied down. Later, they told us it seemed like a blazing candle riding the ship's back. A bright, clear flame flared for a moment when we cleaved the atmosphere.

And I remember the look on Murchison's face as he left us to go out there. It was tense, bitter, strained — as if he were being *compelled* to go outside — as if he had no choice about volunteering for martyrdom.

I often wonder about that now. No one had ever made Murchison do anything he didn't want to do — until then.

We think of the Shaulans as gentle, meek, defenseless. Murchison crossed one of them, and he died. Gentle, meek, yes — but defenseless?

Maybe they sabotaged the ship somehow and forced Murchison into self-martyrdom because he knew he'd been the cause. I don't know.

It sort of tarnishes his glorious halo.

But sometimes I think Murchison was right about the Shaulans, after all. In any case, I've never been back there. And I don't intend to, even if the computer picks me to go.

— ROBERT SILVERBERG

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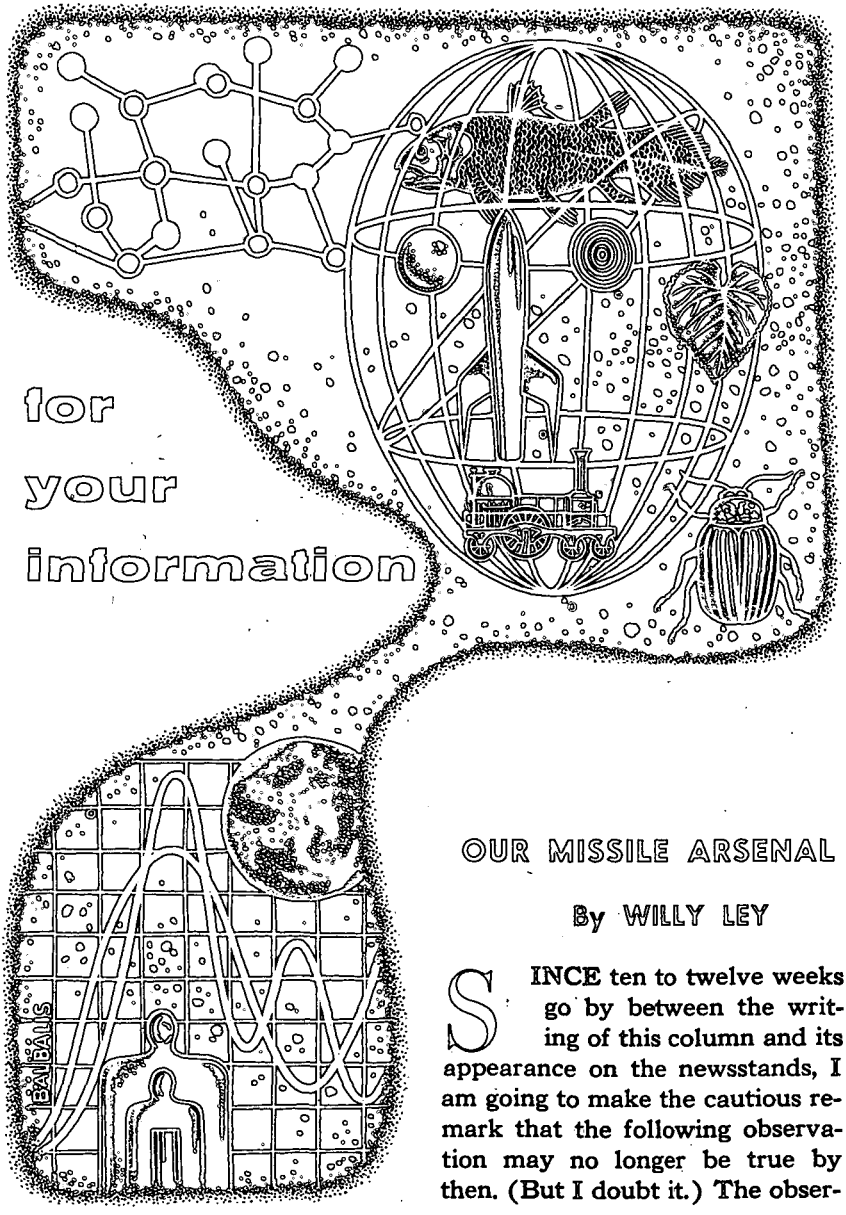

OUR MISSILE ARSENAL

By WILLY LEY

SINCE ten to twelve weeks go by between the writing of this column and its appearance on the newsstands, I am going to make the cautious remark that the following observation may no longer be true by then. (But I doubt it.) The obser-

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vation is that most of the things I have been reading in the daily press about missiles during the last few months mostly dealt with missiles that don't yet exist. Or which are, at least, very much unfinished, if you consider the production contract the finish line.

There have been a good many articles about the Air Force's Project Atlas, aimed at creating a ballistic missile with a range of 5000 miles. There has been just as much discussion about the Thor missile, which is to have a range of between 1000 and 1500 miles.

Since this is now considered an "intermediate range," the Thor bears the designation IRBM. The Atlas is called the ICBM.

There have been other articles about a Navy project to create a ballistic missile that can be fired from a submarine without the need for surfacing.

If a newspaper reader, duly digesting and memorizing all this, should arrive at the conclusion that we apparently don't have much worth mentioning *right now,* he would, of course, be wrong. But he could hardly be blamed.

LOOKING over the photographs which accompany this article reminded me of Ordnance Day on the Aberdeen Proving Ground in the Fall of 1956.

It happened to be one of those days when the rain stopped to give the drizzle a chance; in fact, the weather was such that the commanding general said at one point that they were "showing all-weather equipment, demonstrated by all-weather soldiers to an all-weather audience." However, it wasn't really so; it wasn't "all weather"— it was just all kinds of rain. Maybe it was because of this weather that something very significant did not strike me until I woke up the next morning.

In former years, the audience left the Proving Ground trying to get its ears back in shape because of all the gunfire that had been going on.

I remember one such occasion when tanks fought a sham battle which was just as noisy as a real one. Then a flight of jets came in at what seemed to be twenty feet over the bleachers and helicopters rattled down to evacuate the "wounded." Elsewhere, 90-millimeter anti-aircraft guns spit smoke balls into the sky, and when the "enemy" tanks had finally been beaten off and were in retreat, a battery of 280-millimeter guns opened fire on them to make them stay retreated.

After Ordnance Day, 1956, ears kept ringing not with the thunder of guns, but with the roar of rockets. I don't mean to say that no gun was fired — a few guns

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and mortars and even machine guns went off.

But what everybody remembered was the missile arsenal, the gigantic Redstone rocket which had been brought in and erected, the Corporal on its launcher, the Nike battery in the distance.

Everybody remembered the five-second salvo of 64 bombardment rockets which demolished something far away. And the Dart missile which pursued a speeding tank just above the ground and smashed through the center of a big target on top of it. Two enormous Honest John rockets roared into the air to drop 24,000 yards away in some presumably desolate "impact area." One of Honest John's small brothers, named Little John, was fired.

It was rockets and missiles, missiles and rockets all day long.

We do have a missile arsenal in working order. As a matter of fact, we have three, one each for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. However, I am not going to list them according to the Service, but will go by engineering features, beginning with the liquid-fuel rocket-propelled missiles.

THE biggest one in production is the Army's Redstone, which stands nearly 70 feet tall, with a body diameter of almost six feet. The Redstone is not a two-stage, but rather a two-part missile, consisting of a front section which houses warhead and guidance, and an afterbody which houses the fuel tanks and the rocket motor with auxiliary equipment such as fuel pumps. The end of the front section is indicated by the little square fins.

Somewhere along the descending leg of the trajectory, the forward section separates from the afterbody and it seems likely that the forward section can still make some minor trajectory corrections after separation.

The fuels of the Redstone are liquid oxygen and ethyl alcohol, and almost everything that hasn't been mentioned yet is classified information. The range is noncommittally stated to be 200-plus miles, the takeoff weight is classified (but said to be about 40,000 lbs.) and the weight of the payload is a secret. It must be enormous, for the 200-mile V-2 carried a warhead weighing one metric ton and the Redstone is so much bigger.

The next in size among the liquid-fuel rockets is the Army's Corporal, which stands 45 feet tall, has a body diameter of 30 inches and a takeoff weight of about 12,000 lbs. The fuels are red fuming nitric acid and monoethyl aniline. Control is by means of vanes in the exhaust blast. The

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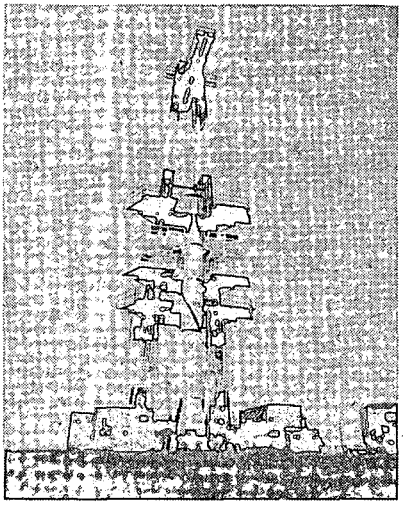

Fig. 1: The Redstone missile.

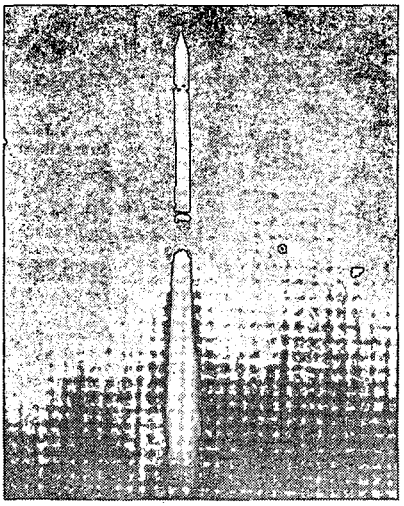

Fig. 2: Corporal missile taking off.

range is only 50 miles, but the payload capacity is good enough for an atomic warhead and the Corporal is said to be extraordinarily accurate.

Because some dimensions are still classified, I am not sure which missile is the next in size. Going by weight (classified, too), chances are that it is the Rascal of the U. S. Air Force. So far, only one retouched photograph has been released, but it is known that the Rascal is an air-to-ground missile developed by Bell Aircraft. Total length of the airplane-shaped missile must be about 35 feet.

A British aviation magazine added some more information. According to this source, the Rascal missile, fueled by liquid oxygen and jet fuel, has a weight of about 13,000 lbs. and is carried up by a bomber, say a B-52. It is then released at some distance from the target, which may be as much as 100 miles. After release, the Rascal first climbs to 100,000 feet, where jet-propelled fighters cannot get at it, and then, after navigating itself to the target, dives in. The warhead can be atomic.

NEXT come two anti-aircraft missiles (both Army), the Nike Ajax and the Nike-Hercules, formerly called Nike B. Nike Ajax is the one first just called Nike and then Nike-A. It is a liquid-fuel rocket 20 feet in

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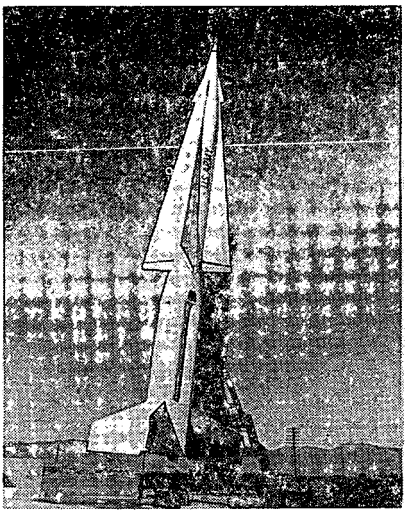

Fig. 3: The Nike-Hercules on its launcher.

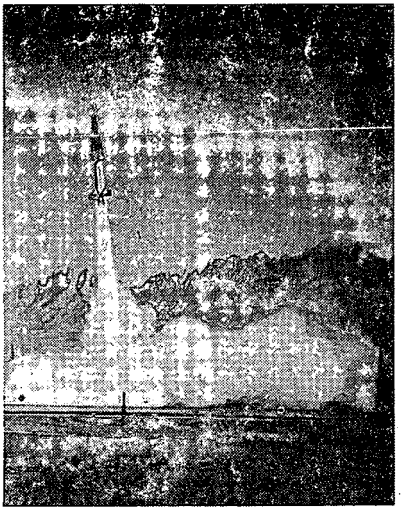

Fig. 4: Nike-Hercules taking off.

length, with a 15-foot solid-fuel booster to get it into the air fast. The fuels for the rocket are red fuming nitric acid and gasoline; its weight (without booster) is 1500 lbs.

Nike Ajax is the one which is now scattered all over the country near large cities. Its operational slant range is 18 to 23 miles and the flying time to maximum range 80 to 110 seconds. Nike Ajax is a so-called beam rider, which means that it follows a guiding beam to the target.

Nike-Hercules is the big brother to the Nike-Ajax. The booster seems to have been put together from four Nike boosters. The rocket is bigger, too. In fact, it is big enough to carry an atomic warhead, the thought being, of course, that an atomic explosion in the midst of an enemy bombing formation will wipe out much more than just one plane.

The Navy's Terrier is a ship-based anti-aircraft missile with an overall length of nearly 27 feet. Unlike the Nike Ajax, the Terrier is a solid-fuel rocket with a solid-fuel booster, but is also a beam rider. The maximum operational slant range is said to be 20 miles.

Going on with solid fuels, a non-missile must be mentioned first—the Army's Honest John. It is not a missile that either can be guided or will guide itself after takeoff; it is very simply a large bombardment rocket.

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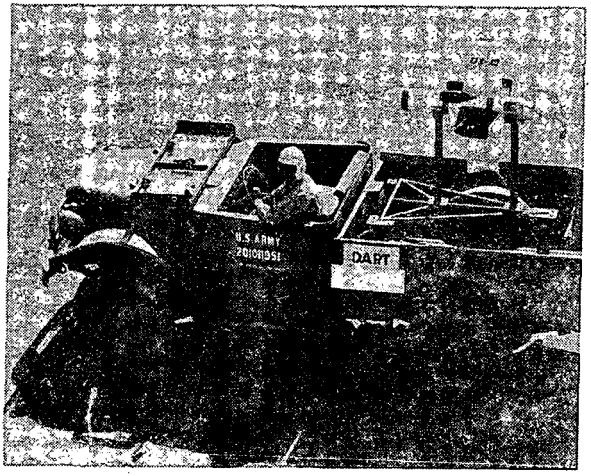

Fig. 5: Anti-tank missile Dart.

And heavy artillery it is: 27 feet 3 inches long with a takeoff weight of 6000 lbs. and a warhead weighing 1500 lbs. The diameter of the warhead is 30 inches, the diameter of the body 23 inches. Its fuel is a single-piece cast solid charge. The operational range is 30,000 yards.

When fired at a very shallow angle (elevation 11 degrees), the peak of the trajectory is only 900 feet above the ground and is reached in nine seconds. Impact for the firing angle takes place after 16.5 seconds at 10,000 yards. For a 50-degree elevation, the peak of the trajectory is 30,000 feet, attained after 41 seconds, and impact at 30,000 yards after 87 seconds.

The Air Force's Sidewinder does not show any external semblance to the rattlesnake after which it has been named and its anatomy is not the same, either. Still, there are some resemblances.

The Sidewinder missile is carried by aircraft as a weapon against other aircraft. It is about nine feet long and probably weighs 150 lbs. In its nose, it carries a heat-seeking homing device. When fired in the general direction of the target, the Sidewinder senses the heat of the target's engine and steers itself into the source of that heat.

It has been said that if there were only one man on an open desert at night, a Sidewinder would find him. And if he ran into his house, slammed the door

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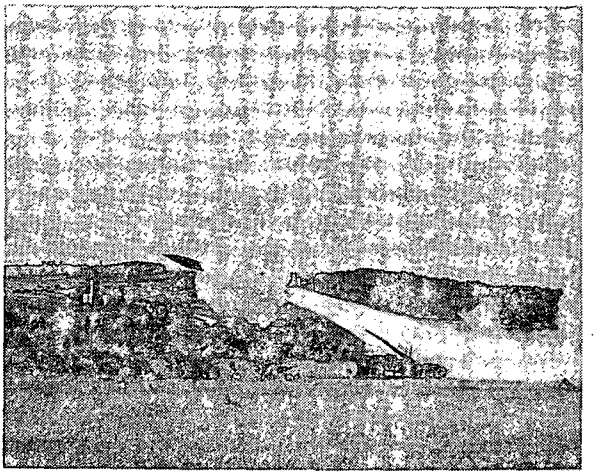

Fig. 6: Honest John rocket taking off.

and hid under the bed, the Sidewinder would come in through the window and join him. This story may have been invented by a Texan, but he probably did not have to exaggerate much.

THE Air Force's Falcon is another one of these homing missiles. It is six feet six inches long and weighs about 120 lbs. Like the Sidewinder — which is also used by the Navy — it is a solid-fuel rocket.

So is the Navy's Sparrow, an eight-foot air-to-air missile with a weight of 300 lbs. and a range of five to seven miles. The Sparrow is not a homing bird, however, but a beam rider.

One Army missile revealed as "ready" only a very short time ago is the Lacrosse, a solid-fuel missile with cruciform wings that have a wing spread of not quite four feet. The operational range of the Lacrosse is eight to ten miles.

The last one on the list of solid-fuel missiles to be mentioned is the little Dart, which, for demonstration purposes, is usually fired from an open small Army vehicle. (In combat, I should think, they'd probably be hiding somewhere.) It is a destroyer of ground targets, mainly tanks but also pillboxes and, possibly, the means of taking a support away from a bridge.

Like the Lacrosse, the Dart has cruciform wings. Its guidance is by wires, an idea first employed by the builders of experimental

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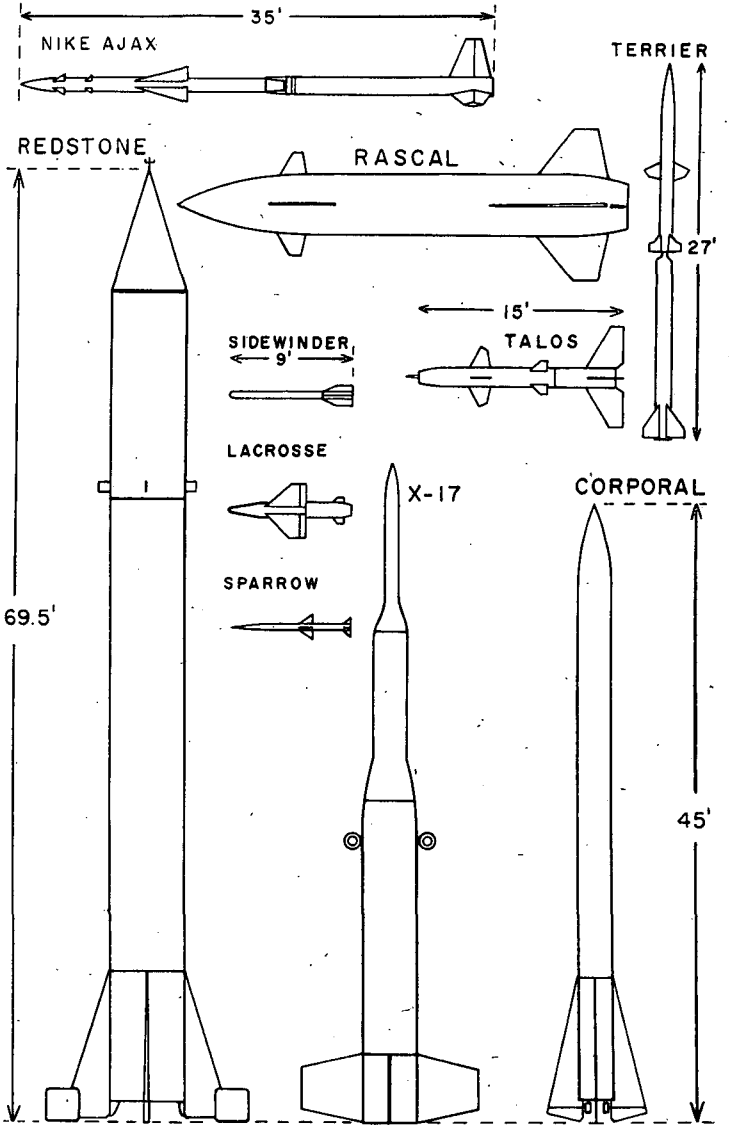

Fig. 7: U. S. Missile Arsenal. (From the Revised Edition of Rockets, Missiles and Space Travel — Courtesy The Viking Press, Inc.)
All photographs "Courtesy U. S. Army"

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naval torpedoes during the so-called gay nineties and later developed by the Germans during World War II. The German device which was to use it was the air-to-air missile X-4, which has acquired some historical fame as being the smallest liquid-fuel rocket missile ever attempted. It flew, but did not get into production.

On two opposing wings, the X-4 carried flares, just to make it more visible to the man who fired it. On the other two opposing wings, the X-4 carried two bobbins containing a mile or so of thin copper wire which unreeled as the missile progressed. The command impulses came to the missile through these wires, making any "jamming" impossible. The Dart uses a method based on the same idea; detail has not been released, of course.

The next "family" of missiles is the one that is characterized by having air-breathing engines like turbojets and ramjets. They seem to be in special favor with the Air Force and the largest of them is the intercontinental *production* missile, the Snark, of which most citizens heard for the first time when one flew to Brazil.

The Snark is an airplane-shaped missile — you might just as well say a pilotless jet plane — with an overall length of 74 feet and a wing span of 42 feet. It is powered by a turbojet engine and catapulted into the air by two solid-fuel takeoff units, each of which delivers 33,000 lbs. of thrust.

Apparently the testing (or training) procedure with the Snark is to have it take off from Patrick Air Force Base in Florida and fly in a straight line down the missile range leading over the Bahamas and Puerto Rico. After 2000 miles or so, the Snark executes a pretty 180 degree turn and it is likely that there is a method of landing the missile when it comes back. The one that got all the publicity simply failed to make that turn.

NEXT one in size is the Air Force's Bomarc missile, which is 39 feet long, has a wing span of 19 feet and a cruising speed of two and a half times the speed of sound, but a comparatively short range of a few hundred miles. The Bomarc is powered by two 28-inch-diameter Marquardt ramjets with 10,000 lbs. of thrust each.

While the Snark is to destroy ground targets, the Bomarc is an anti-aircraft missile, but just how it goes about destroying aircraft is a matter of conjecture. One source guesses that this fighter-sized missile carries an atomic warhead like the Nike-Hercules. Another one says that the Bo-

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marc is a missile-carrier itself, going into action with a load of Falcon missiles.

There are no such secrets about the next missile, the Air Force's Matador, also a pilotless bomber meant to destroy targets on the ground. The 46-foot-long Matador, with a wing span of nearly 29 feet, is powered by a turbojet and takes off with the aid of one large solid-fuel booster rocket. The operational range is 600 miles.

The Navy's equivalent of the Matador is the Regulus, of which there are now two versions, one subsonic, the other supersonic.

The subsonic Regulus is turbojet-powered and takes off with the aid of two solid-fuel boosters. It is 32½ feet long with a wing span of 21 feet. It can either be command-guided or be equipped with homing guidance. The warhead is a nuclear warhead, as in all large missiles.

Regulus II, the supersonic variety, seems to be just a bigger and better Regulus with a more powerful jet engine and a longer range.

The range of the first Regulus (I very narrowly missed writing the regular Regulus) is given as around 500 miles.

Whether the Navy's Petrel should be listed here or not is somewhat doubtful — it may still be under development and then again it may not. At any event, the Petrel is a missile which is dropped by aircraft for the purposes of hunting submarines. The length is given as 24 feet, the wing span as 13 feet, the weight as 3800 lbs. and the range as five miles. Propulsion is by a small turbojet engine. The warhead is high-explosive, not atomic.

The list ends with an air-breathing missile which is used, in slightly different versions, by all three Services, the Talos. It is a supersonic anti-aircraft missile about ten feet in length, powered by an 18-inch-diameter ramjet engine. A solid-fuel rocket booster gets it going. It is probably a beam rider and the operational slant range is at least 50 miles.

THIS completes the list of the missile arsenal we have. But this being a science fiction magazine and its readers being what they are, I know that I am expected to say at least a few words about what is being developed now.

Well, the Navy is thinking about or working on:

(1) the Polaris, intermediate range solid-fuel fleet missile that can be launched from submerged submarines.

(2) the Triton, a ramjet-propelled missile that might be

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described as a super-Regulus of 1500 miles range.

(3) the Lulu, of which it is known that its warhead will be nuclear and its purpose the destruction of submarines. Everything else is either secret or not determined.

(4) the Dove, of which nothing has been said.

As for the Army, it is working on:

(5) the Jupiter, of which it is known that it is big. Period.

(6) the Shrike, of which it is known that it is a liquid-fuel rocket with a nuclear warhead.

The Air Force has the longest list of missiles under development, namely:

(7) the Atlas, of 5000 miles range with hydrogen warhead.

(8) the Titan, of similar range, known to use liquid fuels.

(9) the Thor, of 1500 miles range, using liquid fuels.

(10) the Navaho, of which several versions are under development, ramjet-powered.

(11) to (??) of which nothing has been said. Some of the things you read may just refer to different Navaho versions. Others are probably pure research missiles. Still others could be anti-missiles to take care of intercontinental missiles. And it has been known to happen that a "development" was mostly the hopeful talk of somebody thinking about contracts. But it has been officially said that the Air Force has handed out several study contracts dealing with an unmanned rocket to the Moon.

BUT what is the X-17 on the drawing? The X-17, built by Lockheed, is a pure research missile.

The first stage is a liquid-fuel rocket which has spinner rockets attached near its top that provide a rapid rotation for the whole soon after takeoff as a stabilizing measure. The second stage, a so-called "cluster" of solid-fuel rockets, then carries the third stage out of the atmosphere. The third stage is supposed to turn over outside the atmosphere prior to ignition and then push itself vertically down so as to enter the atmosphere as fast as possible.

The purpose of the whole thing is to find out what happens to a missile when it re-enters the atmosphere from space.

This is something we must know — not only for missiles, but especially for the day when a pilot's ship "re-enters" from space.

— WILLY LEY

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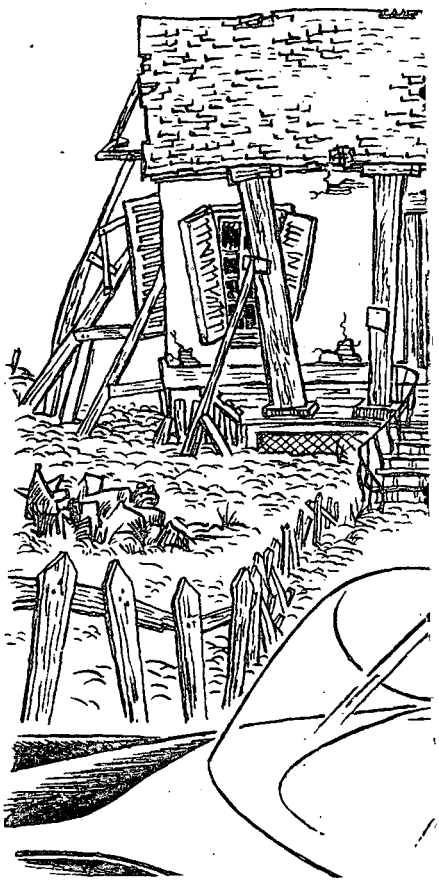
If Money

By DANIEL F. GALOUYE

Certainly they accepted the normal hazards of space . . . but what was normal about being dumped on a world filled with gift horses?



Illustrated by BOWMAN

SCOTT Anderson snapped his *Pilot's Handbook* shut and hunched his thick-set shoulders. "That's about the size of it. There can't be any colonists here!"

"Take it up with *Handbook Modification, son.*" Walter Brad-

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ley, the cartographer, stared out the porthole. "We got colonists, all right, regardless of what Galactodetic Survey says."

Bradley ran a thin hand through his sparse gray hair and motioned the younger man over.

The cooling plates creaked and thumped and Anderson crowded the porthole to stare at the curious crowd, which had grown to several hundred. More were flowing across the plain from the city, a half-mile distant.

"Maybe they're natives," the pilot suggested.

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"Uh-uh," Bradley grunted. "I gave this place too good a once-over on the way down. It's undoubtedly a colonial pattern—five fairly nice-sized cities clustered together with a few hamlets in between. I'd say that represents about two, three hundred years' development from scratch."

"Could be other Joes colonizing this cluster."

"So much like us," the older man asked, "that they even use our alphabet?"

Bradley indicated a man in a white uniform pushing a cart through the crowd. A placard wedged in his hatband read:

FROZEN SNIBDRIPPLES

Thoughtfully, the cartographer worried the ragged edge of his mustache with the back of a finger. "We'd better see how much communication gear that meteor knocked out of the blister."

THE throng shouted a tumultuous welcome as Anderson paused behind the old man on the ramp. "Nobody here to hand us the key to the planet?" he asked facetiously.

"Hm-m-m," Bradley said uneasily. "There certainly doesn't seem to be anyone in authority out there." He held up a hand for silence.

The clamor, however, only mounted as scores charged up the ramp, laughing and jostling one another good-naturedly. The crowd surged in around them like gleeful children.

A slim man, almost as tall as Anderson, seized the pilot's shoulders. "Welcome to Dewonto!"

Grasping the cartographer's arm, a cherubic old woman warmly cried, "Greetings!"

But she scowled abruptly and tugged at her purse, whirling to snag a hand that was fumbling with its lid. She pulled on the captive arm and drew a tousle-haired youngster from the concealment of the crowd. After shaking her finger reprimandingly in his face, she released him.

But Anderson started as he watched the woman snicker and dip her hand deftly into the child's pocket before he could lose himself in the throng.

"Did you see that?" Bradley demanded, surprised.

"The woman and child?" the pilot asked.

"No. Over there. That fellow in the blue suit just picked two pockets!"

A small girl with spritelike brown eyes pulled insistently on Anderson's jacket. "You from Earth, mister?"

But the pilot caught her hand just as it began easing into his hip pocket.

A siren's groan died off in a

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bass sigh as a panel truck pulled up at the rear of the crowd. Painted on its side was a star within a crescent, subscribed by three bold letters: "DUO."

Anderson was suddenly conscious of stealthy movement in the left pocket of his jacket. He released the child and spun around, trapping an adult hand as it withdrew furtively.

"Thief! Pickpocket!" he heard Bradley shout.

Confounded, Anderson watched the cartographer lunge for a young blonde. He missed and went chasing off down the ramp after her.

"Thief!" shouted the pilot exasperatedly, still holding the lean native. "Thieves!"

He patted his inside breast pocket to make sure that the Subcon emergency signal generator was still there.

The crowd gave way as two uniformed men from the truck pushed up the ramp.

"Break it up!" cried one.

The other confronted Anderson and the squirming native. "What's coming off here?"

"I caught him — them —" Anderson glanced around for the little girl —"picking my pockets!"

Bradley labored back up the ramp, dragging the blonde behind him. "Her, too!"

Anderson emptied his pockets to see what was missing. But, dumbfounded, the pilot spread his hand open and stared down at a wristwatch, a gold brooch, two rings and a half-dozen jeweled pins — none of which had been there moments earlier.

Bradley surveyed a similar handful of valuables from his own pockets.

"You're under arrest," one of the officers announced.

"But we didn't *steal* them!" Anderson protested.

"The charge is not dewontoing."

Taking off his uniform blouse and cap, the officer thrust them into the arms of the native Anderson held captive. "Next time, be more careful."

The other policeman deposited his cap on the blonde's head. "Here are the keys. This one's for the truck."

Astonished, the two Galactodetic Survey men let the summarily commissioned officers march them off to the police truck.

THE girl, it seemed, was named Gladys Jerrel. And as Dewontoites went — judging by what Anderson had seen of the native population — she was quite attractive. The uniform blouse fit her clumsily, but its excessive proportions only accentuated her trim figure. The big cap slouched over one side of her forehead, crowning billows of soft hair that

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seemed to flow from under the visor.

She clamped her hands on her hips, confronting the pilot. "For the fourth time — you were arrested because you failed to dewonto. Not dewontoing is *the* crime."

"*The* crime?"

"Of course. From your attitude, one would imagine there were others."

"But —"

Bradley, half reclining on a richly upholstered couch, poured himself another drink and grinned. "Don't get yourself all excited, son. I imagine if I was your age, I'd settle for a life term in *this* kind of a jail." Lifting a shaggy eyebrow, he surveyed his luxuriant surroundings.

And Anderson, too, gawked at broad expanses of gray marble walls, at a vaulted ceiling supported by ornate columns, at gossamer-clad girls dancing to the accompaniment of a flute and two stringed instruments.

He turned back sourly on the old man. "It'll *be* a life term if we don't get away before Mother Ship pulls out of this sector."

"Take it easy, Scott boy. Before we try anything, let's find out what this place is all about, or we might get in deeper."

"You don't look like you're trying to find out anything."

Bradley sank lower into the cushions. "Let's say I'm a casual observer." He passed the glass slowly under his nose, inhaling audibly. "Very casual."

Anderson threw up his hands. "I should worry. We have Subcon senders. All we have to do is press a button and Mama and her other twenty-nine map-tracing scouts will come running."

The cartographer straightened abruptly. "That's just what I want to avoid — using the Subcontinuum SOS to call in the others. With Mother Ship here, this colony will certainly be recorded and opened up."

"That would be bad?"

"I'm ready to concede there's something — uh — not quite proper about Dewonto." Bradley was dead serious now. "I have an idea that if normal intercourse is set up between this planet and the rest of the Galaxy, there'll be drastic results."

"Don't get too wrapped up in your observations," the pilot warned caustically. "We've only got six days to get back to the mapping party on our own or turn on the SOS."

Twenty-foot-high doors swung open and the other policeman entered. "Will you see them now, sirs?"

"Who?" Anderson asked.

"The contractors. They want to know if you'll accept city homes or country estates."

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"Later." The cartographer waved him off. "See what I mean, Scott boy? We got a lot to learn."

Gladys came over. "They're only trying to dewonto," she explained.

Anderson frowned uncomprehendingly. "What the devil is this dewontoing?"

"Look. I'll show you."

SHE pulled him close and sent her arms gliding around his neck. Her kiss was warm and long.

"See?" she asked, backing off.

Grinning, the pilot stepped forward eagerly. "No, but I'm willing to learn."

He grasped her around the waist. But she pushed herself away and struck him resoundingly on the cheek.

The music stopped and the dancing girls exited through a side door. The other policeman reappeared, announcing: "Judge Basil will hear your case now."

They were led to the courtroom and seated, with Anderson still rubbing his cheek baffledly.

The judge was small and rotund, with jowls much like a bulldog's. His black robe was an aura of sobriety. But his disposition was altogether out of keeping with his stern appearance as he shifted eagerly beneath the "DUO" escutcheon that hung above his chair.

After smiling indulgently down on Anderson and Bradley, he glanced at the crier.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" intoned the latter. "Comes now the case of Dewonto versus Defendants Scott Anderson and Walter Bradley, charged with failure to dewonto."

"Notice the coincidence," Bradley whispered to the pilot, "between the names of the planet and the crime we're charged with. It might mean something."

Judge Basil banged his gavel, then flinched apologetically. "This court finds you innocent of —"

The crier leaped up. "Not yet, Sid. You got to dress it up a little first."

"Oh?" The judge relaxed disappointedly.

The crier turned to return to his desk, but the judge's hand darted out and slipped something sparkling into the court official's pocket.

"Let's see now," said the judge, concealing a snicker, "you're charged with not dewontoing. Moreover, you molested two dewontoers. This court finds..."

HIS voice trailed off under the disdainful stare of the crier.

"Oh, dear," moaned the judge. Then, more determinedly, "Darn it, fellows, you shouldn't have done that! Ain't nobody else on Dewonto acting up like you two!"

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Anderson glanced hopelessly at Bradley. "Look, Your Honor, why not just let us go back to our ship? We'll — uh — dewonto from now on."

The judge rapped his gavel. "Silence! We can't let you go back."

"Why not?"

Judge Basil folded his hands patronizingly. "I'll put it this way: Ain't no place anywhere as good as Dewonto, I don't suppose. See what it says right up there?"

He thrust a thumb up toward the escutcheon emblazoned with the letters "DUO."

"If *I* came here, I'd want somebody to see that *I* stayed," he stated.

"What does it mean?" the pilot asked insistently.

"Why — why —" The judge looked helplessly at the crier, who stepped up to whisper into his ear.

"Why," Judge Basil declared confidently, "it means D-U-O, that's all."

"The jobs, Your Honor," prompted the crier.

"Oh, yes — the jobs." The judge turned back toward the defendants. "I realize you'd naturally like to be placed on sewer maintenance. But everybody can't get the plums —"

He stopped abruptly and glanced at the crier. "Judicial immunity for the sentencing?"

"Judicial immunity," the other agreed condescendingly.

"Then," the judge continued, "until you two are adjusted, I am placing you in the custody of this policewoman. And I am assigning you, Mr. Bradley, to the position of Civic Overseer and you, Mr. Anderson, as Judge of the First and Only Municipal, Civic, Criminal and Federal Court."

The crier smiled approvingly as Judge Basil slipped out of his robe and handed it over to the pilot.

OUTSIDE the All-Courts building, Anderson and the cartographer sat idly on the curb. Gladys, between them, drew her knees up thoughtfully under her chin.

"Look, fellows," she proposed, "why don't you just go to work? Everything'll come out all right."

"You don't understand," the old man said. "We're from Galactodetic Survey Headquarters. We're supposed to map new star systems. If we come across anything like Dewonto, we've got to report it as a lost colony."

Anderson grumbled, "I wouldn't worry about reporting this place, Walt. Nobody'd believe it anyway."

"So we've got a few official questions to ask," the cartogra-

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pher continued. "And if you'll just tell us where we can find somebody in authority —"

"Then we can get back to our ship," the pilot finished.

Gladys smiled affably. "You can get back to the ship all right. But it won't do you any good."

"Why not?"

"They've emptied it."

"What!" Anderson exploded.

"But of course. After all, you had a lot of property there. The only thing to do was to take it off your hands."

The pilot jumped up. "You mean they stole everything aboard?"

She shook her head disdainfully. "You have such an odd perspective. They just dewontoed, the same as any decent person would have." She motioned across the street. "Look."

A man lumbered up the sidewalk, struggling under the weight of a familiar object. Anderson leaned forward more attentively. It was the ship's pulse-firing control console. The Dewontoite paused beside a parked automobile, guiltily glanced up and down the street, then deftly pushed the console onto the car's back seat. He sprinted away.

The pilot reached angrily into his pocket for the Subcon SOS generator. "That settles it!"

"Wait!" Bradley caught his hand and drew him away from the girl. "It may be that this planet can't ever enjoy normal relations with any other world. Their philosophy is obviously different. Their culture is built on some strangely twisted negative principles."

"What do you expect us to do? Let Mother Ship shove off without us just so nobody'll disturb Dewonto's cozy little cockeyed way of life?"

"I don't know. But we've still got time to trip off the emergency signals if we decide that's the right thing to do. In the meantime, let's observe a little more."

ANDERSON hauled the girl to her feet. "Take me to the mayor or whoever makes the wheels spin around here."

"That's easy." She shrugged, extending a hand toward Bradley in an introductory gesture. "His Honor, the Civic Overseer."

Groaning, the pilot sank back down on the curb.

A flashy sports model car pulled up and the driver leaped out. Sheepishly, he dropped the keys in Anderson's hand. "Now if you'd rather nothave the super-deluxe job —"

The pilot numbly shook his head.

"You'll take this one?" The driver seemed surprised. Then he raced away before Anderson could answer.

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The pilot turned toward the girl. "Gladys, there's something — not quite right about Dewonto, you know. Elsewhere, people don't give things away, except on special occasions."

Her confusion bordered on alarm, with her neatly painted lips drawn into a little crimson circle. "You mean everybody's a taker? But I don't see —"

"Since they don't have Subcon to communicate with the other worlds," the cartographer interrupted, "it's obvious that the original colonists planned total isolation just so they could start this kind of society."

The pilot nodded back at the All-Courts building, at the bronze plaque above the main entrance. "DUO — what does it mean, Gladys?"

The girl shrugged.

"Evidently," Bradley offered, withdrawing from deep thought, "the symbol remains after its literal meaning has been lost."

"You got it figured out?" Anderson shifted an eyebrow.

The old man nodded pensively. "I think I'm beginning to see. Dewonto — not *dewon-to,* but *do unto.* D-U-O: Do Unto Others. The Golden Rule."

Anderson straightened. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!"

Gladys laughed.

"That's cute!"

BRADLEY'S finger thoughtfully traced one of the deep creases in his face. "They've been following it so long that it's become a basic way of life — built on diligent work, bloated production, mountainous surpluses — giveaway on a cosmic scale."

"Damn!" Anderson exclaimed. "Would we have a good thing here!"

"What do you mean?" the old man asked.

Gladys turned away disinterestedly and went over to examine the new-model car.

"Out of a couple of million people who are one hundred per cent givers," Anderson said, "we're the only hundred per cent receivers."

Bradley scratched his chin pensively. "That might not be such a bad idea."

"Sure. They'd give us the whole planet if we let them."

"That's not quite what I had in mind, son. These Dewontoites have to be snapped back to normal before contact or they'll be the prize suckers of the Galaxy."

"And you want to snap them out of it by going around preaching against the Golden Rule?" the pilot challenged.

Bradley shook his head. "That wouldn't work — not in the six days we have left to SOS the mapping party before it gets out of range. If preaching couldn't make other people follow the

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Golden Rule, high-sounding phrases won't make these follow the Brass Rule. The only thing to do is show them that the Golden Rule was never meant to be a theory of economics and just exactly why it shouldn't be."

"You think we can do it?"

"This system is based on absolutely literal application of the Golden Rule. Sure, it works — but only because its basic vulnerability hasn't been attacked. Tearing ours down would mean shutting off all purchasing power, which just can't be done. But this economic system is wide open to attack — all we have to do is take everything they can provide!"

Gladys had returned from her inspection of the car and had stood by studying Bradley as he finished outlining his plan.

"You mean," she asked in unbelieving awe, "that you're going to accept everything that's offered?"

"Everything," Bradley assured her, grinning.

Anderson took the girl's arm and led her toward the car. "Gladys, why did you kiss me at the jail?"

She reddened. "Because I — guess it was what I wanted you to do to me."

That figured: do unto others. "But you slapped me when *I* kissed *you*."

"Of course. You wanted me to, didn't you? That's what I would have expected you to do if you had been in my place. Where are we going?"

The pilot fretted over the illogical kinks. "We're taking you home."

The girl's family, it turned out rather astonishingly, were members of the city's elite, being extremely poor-to-do and living in one of the most respectably deteriorated downtown districts — just across the railroad tracks.

Gladys paused in front of the home and proudly spread her arms in a sweeping gesture that more than took in the cramped breadth of the thirty-foot lot. "Don't jump at conclusions. All this impressive non-wealth doesn't mean I'm a spoiled social butterfly."

Bradley coughed embarrassedly. "Forget it, child. I can tell you aren't the kind who'd let poverty go to your head."

INCREDULOUSLY, Anderson took in the paint-worn frame house with its patched roof and thin leaning columns and tired walls held erect by makeshift props.

"Papa is considering accepting a new house from one of the contractors," she said, leading them up groaning steps. "But we can't do that. Not a family of our

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standing. Don't you agree?"

Papa, short and stout and amply enveloped in patched coveralls, was replastering a hole in the living room wall. Under the girl's severe stare, he tried to hide the trowel.

"Honestly, Papa!" Gladys stamped her foot. "If it weren't for Mother and me, we'd be living in a brick home with inlaid floors!"

She introduced Anderson and the cartographer.

"From the ship, eh?" her father asked, walking cautiously around the GS crewmen. He drew a tape measure from his pocket and stretched it across Anderson's shoulders. "Couldn't interest you in a suit, could I?"

"Papa's a tailor," Gladys explained.

"No," Anderson said. "I don't think so."

But Bradley stepped hastily forward. "Yes, you can. He'll take a dozen."

Papa Jerrel stiffened in disbelief. "With two pairs of pants apiece?"

"Three. With vests. And I think he'd like a half-dozen casual jackets and slacks."

Apparently this was too much for Papa Jerrel. He clasped his hands in front of his face. "You don't know what this means—"

"I'll need clothes, too," the cartographer went on munificently. "You'd better measure me up and double the order."

The girl's father was beside himself with gratitude. "Thank you! Thank you, gentlemen . . . Mama!"

A sedate little lady with a moth-ravaged shawl draped over her shoulders made a timid entrance. Gladys, perched on an arm of the sofa and thereby avoiding the springs that protruded through the cushions, introduced her.

"A celebration's in order, Mama!" the tailor cried. "I've unloaded! And I don't have to take anything in return! I won't even show a surplus on the books this month. Do we have any wine?"

Bradley winked at the pilot. "Looks like we've stirred up something, son. I think we might build an interesting experiment around Papa Jerrel. By keeping his supply of material depleted, we might make him place a *positive* value on his product."

Anderson nodded in comprehension. "And his demand for raw material might exceed the supply."

"Right. Then—in Papa Jerrel's line, at least—the old law of supply and demand might replace this system of ostentatious doing without—conspicuous unconsumption, you might say. But time's short. We'll have to pass this up for bigger things if we're

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going to set Dewonto straight."

"Of course we have wine," Mama Jerrel told her husband. "A cellar full. Remember? Last month you let a winemaker dump a whole month's output on us just so you could unload two suits."

Papa paled momentarily and confronted Bradley. "You fellows couldn't use a few cases of wine, too, could you?"

JOINING in the toast that Papa had proposed in the name of greater austerity, Anderson sipped from his glass and set it back on the table. Then he pretended not to see Mama Jerrel as she emptied half the contents of her glass into his.

"You see, Mr. Bradley," the tailor said, "conditions are driving me to the rich house. The textile manufacturers are constantly pounding at my door, trying to get rid of new bolts of cloth. And there's no legal limit on the amount of material they can dump on us."

"That's no way to talk," Gladys scolded. "If you were a textile manufacturer, you'd expect the tailors to take all the bolts you could deliver, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so," he conceded grumpily.

There was an impatient pounding at the door and Gladys let the caller in. He was a lean, bald man with a worried expression.

He smiled, though, when he saw the two spacemen. "Thought I would find you here. Now about that house —"

"What house?" Anderson asked densely.

"The one I'd like to — give you."

"Fine!" Bradley cut in. "When can we get it?"

"You'll take it?" The man's spirits soared. "I'll bring you over there right away. It's not very desirable, I admit. Four stories, thirty-two rooms, acres of grounds and fences and tiled streams —"

"How many others can you let us have?"

The contractor drew back unbelievingly. "We have twenty-six unoccupied and fourteen under construction."

"We'll take them all. Tomorrow you can send the other contractors around."

Papa turned to his wife. "Gladys said they were *real takers.*"

The contractor was speechless.

Anderson took him by the arm. "Let's go."

"Wait!" Gladys followed them out to the car. "I'm going, too. I want to see how this comes out. Anyway, you're in my custody, remember?"

IF the rest of the metropolitan area suffered from a lack of elaborate embellishments, Hobo

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Heights more than made up for the inadequacy. Here, pretentious mansions reared their impressive bulks above great expanses of carefully trimmed lawns and meticulously tended hedges.

But they were empty – all except one.

In that one, dominating the tallest elevation, Anderson perched on a marble window sill and motioned for Gladys to come over. In the luxury of the reception room, with its gold-trimmed furniture and rich tapestries, she seemed ill at ease and fretful.

"Do you suppose," he asked sportively, "that you'll ever see the day when all these homes are occupied – with Dewontoites competing against one another for the chance to live in them?"

She stiffened, appalled. "They're empty because we'd be ashamed to accept them. That would be not dewontoing."

The hypothetical analogies were coming easier now. It was as though he had asked an inworld girl if she thought the elite of her planet would ever move out of their swanky homes and fight for the broken-down tenements.

Anderson looked reflectively at Gladys, only now realizing that she *was* attractive. And he wondered whether he might not have been impressed by her looks sooner, if it weren't for the aura of abnormality that she shared with all the other Dewontoites.

He tentatively held up a finger. "Dewonto, first phase: You leave the big houses empty so they'll be avialable for anybody who might want them. A sort of pre-arranged charitable gesture."

She nodded uncertainly.

"Dewonto, second phase: If you people are really interested in doing unto others, you'd grab up all the mansions you could get. By leaving them unoccupied and by hogging the simpler residences, you're not dewontoing at all. You're forcing an occasional Dewontoite to live in a mansion whenever he can't find anything else."

Her mouth fell open in abrupt realization.

Anderson smiled, at last able to see hope in the situation. Now he could agree with Bradley when the cartographer insisted they might set Dewonto on the right cultural path within the next five days. By the time they used the Subcon SOS generator to call Mother Ship, these people would be well on the way toward assuming a normal role in Galactic civilization.

THERE was the din of voices and the heavy clump of footsteps in the corridor. The door burst open, admitting Bradley and a horde behind him.

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The cartographer waved a newspaper. "We did it! They accepted the ad!"

"Front page?" Anderson asked above the clamor of excited businessmen.

The old man spread the paper open. The display ad, blocked off across half the page, read in huge letters:

COME ONE – COME ALL
to
ANDERSON AND BRADLEY
Hobo Heights

"REAL TAKERS!!!"
WE'LL TAKE AS MUCH AS
YOU'VE GOT OF ANYTHING
YOU WANT TO GIVE

No tricks! No Unloading!
You don't have to accept
anything in return!!!

"It wasn't easy, though," the cartographer complained. "We had to take two thousand subscriptions."

"Well, I guess we owed them something for printing the ad," Anderson said.

Bradley turned to the throng behind him. "Line forms on the right. Are there any furniture manufacturers here?"

Five anxious men and two women stepped forward.

"We've taken over all the homes in Hobo Heights," the cartographer said. "They need furnishings. Can you handle the job?"

There was a chorus of yesses as pencils worked frenziedly on order pads.

"We expect to accept new homes at the rate of about thirty a day. I'll want you to furnish them, too."

"You sure we don't have to take anything in return?" one of the furniture men asked suspiciously.

"Not a thing. Now do we have any heavy industrial equipment manufacturers here?"

Six others came forward eagerly. The cartographer put in orders for three thousand tractors, twenty-two hundred bulldozers, six hundred cranes, three hundred and fifty steam shovels and a thousand pile-drivers.

In quick succession, he accommodated representatives of clothing firms, shoe manufacturers, automobile and truck producers (twelve thousand cars and sixty-four hundred trucks), cosmetics concerns, jewelers, food handlers and agents for scores of other products—until the assembly had dwindled to a handful.

"Think it'll work?" Anderson asked after they had accompanied the last to the door.

"We're probably well on the way toward cutting into their surpluses," Bradley mused. "When we corner all the present stocks

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of commodities, there'll be one hell of a scramble for new goods. When that happens, they'll either follow normal supply and demand or go hungry, naked and cold."

"I hope so," Anderson said.

"It can't miss," Bradley assured him.

BUT somehow Anderson failed to share Bradley's complacency—particularly the next night as he sat in front of the video screen watching "Winner Give All." The contestant, a small-craft builder, had just won the right to unload on the sponsor three cabin cruisers, a yacht and eight inboard powerboats. Now he was going to try for double.

The pilot again began worrying about the likelihood of success in their plan to rebuild a cultural system in — how much time did they have left? — four days.

He turned toward Gladys, who was gazing intently at him. To her, he realized, he and Bradley must seem like magnificent benefactors.

"What are you trying to do, Scott?" she asked. "There must be something behind all this taking — some sort of scheme."

He filled his pipe and went over to the French doors, opened them and stepped out on the balcony into the brilliant glare of Dewonto's three satellites.

The blazing match cast a red glow on his grave features. "There are many other worlds in the Galaxy, Gladys. Someday their ships will come here regularly and this lost colony will be part of Galactic civilization."

He blew out the match and sucked on the stem until the glowing bowl illuminated his face as much as the flame had.

"But the rest of the Galaxy," he went on, "is built on different principles: 'The Lord helps those who help themselves,' 'Charity begins at home,' 'A fool and his money are soon parted'."

"You mean it's all selfishness and greed out there?"

"Let's say we recognize that every individual should be rewarded for his effort, rather than have to pay for the privilege of exerting it."

"Isn't the privilege a reward in itself?" When he didn't answer, she went on, "You want to make Dewonto over in the likeness of those other worlds?"

"It's something that has to be done. We found this world. Even if the news of its existence doesn't get back to the rest of the Galaxy this time, sooner or later Dewonto will be discovered again and will have to take its place."

She stared incredulously at him. "You want us all to be full-time takers and — and get whatever we can from one another!

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You're just trying to trick us into never being able to dewonto again! I hate you! And just when I — was beginning to — to start to like you!"

She turned to run off. But he grabbed her shoulders. "You're going to tell the others what we want to do?"

"No. That wouldn't be dewontoing." She avoided his eyes. "You wouldn't want me to do that."

He released her and she fled back into the house. Then, for a long while, he stood leaning on the balcony railing, pulling on his pipe and looking unseeingly out over the countryside.

His hand crept toward the Subcon pack. All he had to do was press a button and, within a few hours, Mother Ship would be squatting on the lawn below.

But news of the lost colony would spread with subcontinuum speed. Within weeks, Dewonto would be crawling with millions of opportunists — all takers, all out to milk the defenseless planet dry.

The disillusionment suffered by the natives would be brutal. Their whole world would be utterly ruined.

He slipped the emergency signal generator back into his pocket. Bradley's plan of showing them the way — forcing them to work out their own transition — was merciful by comparison. It *had* to succeed.

ANDERSON had a late breakfast in his bedroom the next morning. On the grounds below, men shouted, gears clashed and brakes squealed as truck after truck rolled across the lawn unloading orders.

The cranes and bulldozers and the army of tractors were lined up abreast along the bank of one of the streams that sliced across the estate. Closer to the mansion, conveyor belts had erected three mountains of canned goods.

On two fields across the stream, automobiles and trucks were being lined up in hundreds of long straight rows. The vehicular stockpile was already invading two adjoining estates.

Here and there, smaller hills of goods were rearing up — crates of shoes and boxes of clothes and barrels of wine, piles of toys, pens filled with livestock, cartons of eggs, milk containers.

Ships and shoes and sealing wax, Anderson thought.

Bradley, already dressed, came in as the pilot finished eating.

"If we expect to leave this place at all," the cartographer said soberly, "it's going to *have* to be by using the Subcon generator. I've just been over to the ship, trying to see if it might be possible to get all the pieces to-

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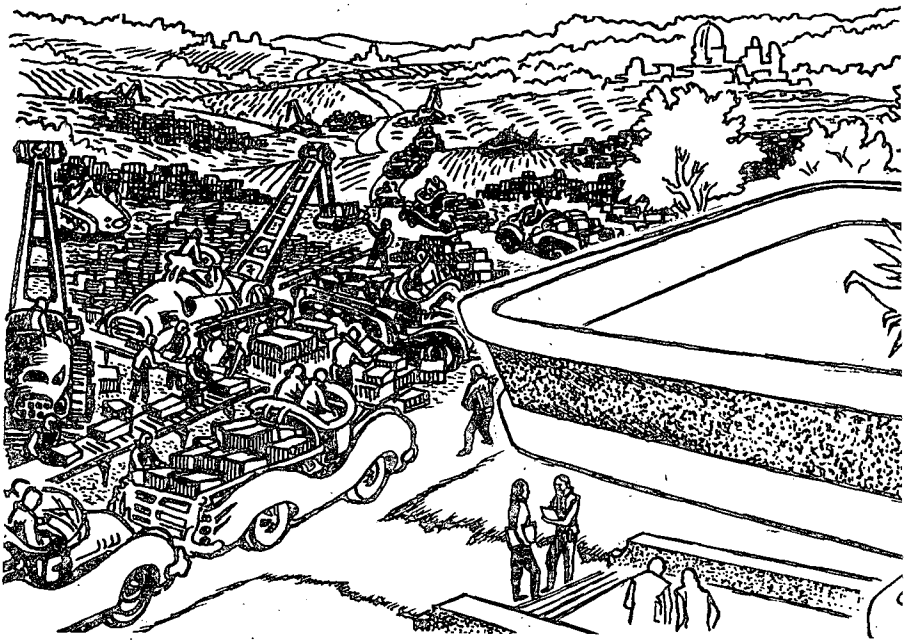

gether again. But the parts were too well scattered."

For once, it was Anderson who was confident. "We won't have to depend on the scout craft. We've got three days left. Before time's up, we'll have these natives eagerly waiting to drive some shrewd bargains with Mother Ship when she answers our SOS."

He took a quick shower, shaved and selected a new suit.

"I've been thinking, though," Bradley told him while he finished dressing, "that we're still not going about this thing as efficiently as we could."

Anderson paused attentively.

"Well," the old man explained, "we've been whittling away at

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the surplus of *finished* products. Manufacturers can still get all the supplies they want from the raw material producers."

Anderson nodded. "I see what you mean. With a shortage of raw materials, those boys who just unloaded on us will have to pay the price to get more raw materials."

"Then run down to that newspaper office and place another ad. Make it read: 'Anderson & Bradley, unlimited manufacturers of all products, need raw materials — sheet steel, structural beams, lumber, textiles' — all that sort of stuff. We'll take everything they got."

The pilot turned to leave.

"Hurry back," Bradley urged. "I have something just as big lined up."

"What now?"

"Since I'm Civic Overseer, I'm going to start overseeing. Today I'll tour the city on a housing inspection. I'm going to condemn substandard dwellings and order the residents out."

Anderson snapped his fingers. "That's it! We'll *make* them move into our mansions!"

"Exactly. And while I'm condemning the shacks, you're going to be charging pretty steep rental rates for the homes in Hobo Heights. The tenants will *have* to make money to afford a roof over their heads."

Anderson grabbed his hat.

"And while you're in town," the cartographer called after him, "drop in at the Chamber of Commerce and arrange to assume ownership of all the commercial buildings. We'll either collect rent or sell the property back at exorbitant prices. In order to meet those prices, they're going to

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have to show *real* gains on their other transactions."

IN the mansion's main reception room, Anderson squirmed in his full-dress jacket.

"Is this necessary?" he asked dismally.

Bradley slapped him encouragingly on the back. "We're demonstrating how life should be lived. This party won't have any immediate results. But after our other lessons sink in, they'll remember it. They'll realize this sort of thing, too, is part of a proper social life."

Four orchestras provided the music. A corps of maids and butlers, stiffly erect in formal uniforms, passed trays among the guests.

The only anomalies at the reception were the guests themselves. The men had come attired in work clothes, the women in simple house dresses. However, other than trying an occasional dance, they merely stood around uncertainly.

Perhaps, Anderson ventured, they felt a sense of guilt at indulging themselves in this manner. Or, more likely, they were seriously beginning to question their rejection of the finer things.

The pilot readjusted his white tie against the stiff-wing collar and, drink in hand, followed the cartographer onto the veranda. Two moons cast their glow on ridges and peaks of boxes, crates and machines that inundated the grounds of the mansion and the adjoining four estates.

Bradley's face was tired but pleased. "We've had a good day. The groundwork is laid. All that's left to do is let supply and demand take its normal course. And, of course, give things a little prod here and there."

"When will we find out if we've succeeded?"

"Within the next two days, we should know whether we can call on Mother Ship to pick us up without destroying a civilization."

"Suppose the test fails? Suppose we learn these people *can't* be changed?"

Bradley's shoulders lifted. "Then we'll have to decide whether we want to see the civilized Galaxy again so much that we'd wreck a world."

Gladys, in an extravagant evening dress which she had worn because Anderson "would have done the same" for her, stepped out onto the veranda and looked about anxiously.

She saw the two spacemen and came over. "Why don't you let these people go home? They've had enough."

"Aren't they enjoying themselves?" the pilot asked lightly.

"Of course not. They came expecting to see the climax of

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some brand-new dumping trick. Naturally they would have regretted being saddled with goods. But it would have been worth it because they would have been assured that, after all, you are Dewontoites at heart."

"You mean," Anderson persisted, "they're beginning to suspect we don't intend to play their way?"

"They're beginning to get disgusted. They want to go home."

Anderson reached out solicitously for her hand.

She drew back. "I'm going to tell them the party's over."

The pilot kept his eyes on the girl as she returned to the reception room — on her bright blonde hair that heightened the smooth texture of her back; on the slim but strong shoulders, seemingly held high in protest over the intrusion upon Dewonto's calm life; on the rhythm of movement that set the hem of her dress swirling gracefully about her ankles.

"Easy now, Scott boy." Bradley gripped his arm and laughed. "She's just beginning to hate you, remember?"

"WAKE up!" Bradley was shouting insistently as Anderson opened his eyes and lazily rolled over.

"The population's started moving — they're leaving the slum areas," the cartographer said, his face seemingly older and somewhat more strained.

Puzzled, Anderson glanced out the window. But there was no sign of life around the mansions, spotted on the visible hilltops.

"They must be finding our rent too high," he said, smiling. "That's encouraging. Shows they're beginning to recognize values."

"Guess again," Bradley said glumly, spreading open a copy of the morning paper.

A four-column picture showed a plain south of the city with thousands of tents thrown up in rows. Anderson frowned uncomprehendingly.

"We condemned their homes and chased them out, all right," said Bradley dispiritedly. "But they didn't start renting our mansions. They just pitched tents instead."

"I don't understand."

Bradley read from the paper:

" 'The vast majority of Dewontoites of this city'— this is a front-page editorial — 'now face an immeasurably more rewarding status of frugal existence, thanks to the visiting spacemen. In this matter, newly appointed Civic Overseer Bradley has shown a remarkable DUO capacity. For only he foresaw that by having their residences condemned would our citizens discover an even more thorough method of domestic self-privation.

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" 'The foresight of the visitors was again demonstrated when they assumed ownership of Hobo Heights. That made it impossible for dispossessed Dewontoites to move into these hilltop homes, even if they had decided upon that as a last resort'."

Anderson took the news with a sickening sensation and struggled out of bed. "What are we going to do?"

"I'm hoping it's just a temporary setback. When they bump into all the other economic upheavals we've prepared, they might find they don't have time to readjust to tent life. And they may change their minds about Hobo Heights."

Anderson swallowed with difficulty. "What's that smell?" Sniffing, he traced the disturbing odor to the double doors and ventured out on the balcony.

"Some of those milk cans spilled on delivery yesterday," the cartographer said.

It wasn't only the souring milk, Anderson realized. There were thousands of broken egg crates. And swarms of insects were like low-lying clouds over the hills of unpackaged meats and vegetables. He realized now that they should have qualified that line in the ad about accepting anything.

The butler appeared at the door. "There's a delegation of manufacturers to see you, sirs."

AFTER dressing hurriedly, Anderson went with Bradley to the north drawing room. Showing the eager anticipation of children with a secret, the delegates crowded anxiously around the spacemen.

"We came to express our gratitude," proclaimed one.

"Why?" Bradley drew back misgivingly.

"Because we would have continued on as finished-product manufacturers the rest of our lives if you hadn't cut in on our supplies."

"And," added another, "we were getting tired of turning out finished articles that nobody wanted — except to unload on somebody else."

"So," continued a third exuberantly, "we all decided to become producers of raw materials."

"And now," resumed the first, "we'll all be happy. With big operators like you handling the manufacture of finished products, and with all of us supplying the raw materials you need, we'll achieve an output that we've never seen before!"

Arm in arm and jabbering enthusiastically, the delegation marched out, leaving a gaping pilot and cartographer.

The butler appeared in the doorway in their wake. "The president of the Chamber of Commerce, gentlemen."

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The dignitary was a jovial individual who guffawed for no apparent reason all the way from the door to where the two GS surveymen stood.

"Allow me, sirs," he said, "to congratulate you on having won the year's DUO Award."

"For what?" the pilot asked suspiciously.

"For making us realize our commercial buildings were much too pretentious and out of line with the general austerity of Dewonto. By taking them off our hands and pretending to place an enormous negative value on the stores and offices, you made us see the errors of our ways."

"You mean," Bradley asked, disheartened, "you're not going to rent from us or buy the buildings back?"

"Cagy, aren't you, sir?" The Chamber of Commerce president nudged the old man in the ribs. "We're going to run our businesses from our homes — just as you intended from the first. To think it took an outsider to show us the way! You, sirs, richly deserve the DUO Award."

Anderson slumped back against the piano. "The award — what is it?"

The visitor looked about the room. His eyes fell on an elaborate vase. He put it under his arm. "This will do nicely, I think. Thank you, gentlemen."

Anderson stood numbly rigid, aware of only the mounting odor from the piles of spoiling food.

Gladys stepped from behind a column, cried out delightedly and raced forward to throw her arms around the pilot.

"I knew it!" she cried. "I knew all the while it was a trick. You just let me believe you were anti-DUO so I wouldn't give you away!"

Outside, a band played a lively march and thousands of natives jumped up and down, waving banners that proudly proclaimed: "For They Are Jolly Good Dewontoites!"

DISCONSOLATELY, Anderson watched the old spaceman pace the veranda, his shoulders sagging and his thin hair disheveled and seemingly grayer than usual. Dewonto's giant sun slipped below the horizon, dragging along the almost invisible white dwarf that was its companion.

"Why don't we give it up, Walt?" the pilot asked, mixing the Dewontoite equivalent of a scotch and soda. "They just kept one step ahead of us with their DUO thinking."

"But we *didn't* lose! We *couldn't!* It's only —"

"A temporary setback?" The pilot laughed sourly, extending a drink toward the other.

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Bradley took it and gulped. "Of course! You'll see. They're just holding on to their system as long as they can. Those reverses we suffered this morning were simply the final thrashings."

"Sure," Anderson said skeptically. "One minute they'll be confirmed Dewontoites, the next they'll be unprincipled takers, knocking themselves out to earn instead of unload."

Gladys, again in her oversized policewoman's uniform, stepped out of the house into the twilight. "How much longer are we going to stay here?" She gestured disapprovingly at the wealth all around her.

"You don't have to stick around, you know," Anderson told her sullenly.

"Oh, but I do. You're still in my custody. I know what's the matter – you're disappointed because we saw through your clever tricks–embarrassed because we've found you out as real Dewontoites at heart."

"Aw, go blow your tubes," he said bluntly, his mind grappling with more serious issues.

She reddened indignantly. "All right, I will – if that's what you want. All you have to do is release me."

"Release you?" Anderson looked up puzzedly at her.

"Certainly. The judge of the First and Only Municipal, Civic, Criminal and Federal Court assigned you to me. You're the judge now. Only you can take me off this assignment."

Anderson drained his glass and held it out shakily toward the cartographer for a refill. "By virtue of the judicial powers vested in me," he rolled the words out with a heavy tongue, "I now cancel the custodial assignment of one Gladys Jerrel, to wit –"

"Oh!" the girl cried, exasperated. She ran down the walk toward the main gates of the estate.

"Gladys!" Anderson called, immediately contrite, starting off after her.

But Bradley caught his arm. "Let her go, son. Don't forget – she'll hate you a lot more if we decide to SOS Mother Ship."

Anderson dropped down glumly on the chaise longue. Darkness had come and there was only a single moon out to illuminate the piles of surplus material.

"Well, what about it?" he asked finally. "At noon tomorrow, the mapping party jumps into another sector, out of range of our Subcon signalers. We'll be presumed lost." He withdrew his emergency signal generator and placed it on the cocktail table. "Do we yell 'uncle' or not?"

"If we do," Bradley said soberly, "these people are in for one hell of a jolt. They'll practically

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become voluntary slaves with the first wave of visitors. I don't see how they can survive as a people."

ANDERSON started and turned toward the road. Voices – thousands of them. Excited voices. Perhaps even angry.

The horde stormed in through the gates. They deployed into smaller groups and surged toward the hoarded products, sweeping in over the piles of clothes and shoes, enveloping the hills of canned foodstuffs, breaking off in myriad smaller units to overrun the lines of parked automobiles and trucks and bulldozers.

Then the estate resounded with the rattle and rumble of heavy industrial machinery as the tractors and cranes and steam shovels and bulldozers were themselves put to work whittling down and hauling away the stocks of supplies.

Bradley grasped the pilot's shoulder. "We won, boy! We won!"

But Anderson only stared puzzledly at the chaotic scene of plundering. "I don't understand."

"We planted the seeds. The results weren't visible right away, but they were cumulative. Now the dam has burst. And if they decided to loot and plunder to get back the surpluses we tricked them out of, that means they're ready to drive shrewd bargains among themselves for more. Son, we've cured a culture!"

In gratified silence, the two Galactodetic surveymen watched the stockpiles of articles shrink as trucks and cars pulled alongside, parked momentarily, then drove away loaded.

Bradley broke the seals on two more bottles and he and Anderson repeatedly toasted their success.

Finally the pilot held up his Subcon pack. "Think we ought to call Mother Ship now?"

Swaying, the cartographer tripped over the chaise longue and flailed backward. The pilot laughed at the ludicrous sight of the elderly man sprawled across a flower bed.

"Don't think it'd be very wise, Scott boy," Bradley said, rising on an elbow and grinning. "They'd be here in a couple of hours. Wouldn't want 'em to find us in, let's say, such an elated state. Against regulations."

"Guess you're right," Anderson agreed. "Anyway, we still have plenty of time."

THE night assault on the piles of surplus material had been no dream, Anderson reassured himself the next morning as he had an early breakfast with the cartographer on the veranda.

The estate, spread out before

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them in utter disorder, was like the aftermath of an Intragalactic Sales Association picnic, with broken cases and bits of clothing and odd pieces of machinery littering the lawn.

The pilot balanced a strip of bacon on his fork and held it tentatively before his mouth. "You don't suppose we slipped up anywhere, do you?" he asked. "These Dewontoites *are* cured?"

"Oh, the cure wasn't supposed to be instant and total. But from what we saw last night, we can be sure the anti-DUO principle is spreading like a plague by now."

Out of the corner of his eye, Anderson watched the butler peer furtively from behind a potted plant. Pretending not to notice, the pilot watched him tiptoe across the flagstone to the cocktail cart and deftly stuff three bottles under his coat.

"See?" Bradley whispered, nodding unobtrusively toward the servant. "It's working, all right."

There was stealthy movement in the adjacent east reception room and Anderson and the old man looked in through the double doors. Two of the upstairs maids were holding open a pillow case while a stable boy carefully filled it with silverware from one of the tables.

Bradley made a victorious gesture of clasping his hands over his head.

The butler who had pilfered the liquor came over to the breakfast table. "About my wages, sir —"

"Yes?" Anderson prompted hopefully.

"From now on, I'll expect the equivalent of a suit of clothes a

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day, or anything of like value. Your promissory note will do."

"Fine! Fine!" Bradley exclaimed. "You'll be taken care of." He turned to Anderson. "That ought to answer your question about whether these Dewontoites are cured."

The pilot grinned. "I'm convinced." He patted his breast pocket for the Subcon signal generator. "Ready to call Mother Ship?"

But Bradley had dropped his elbows on the table and wedged his cheeks between his palms. He

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was staring thoughtfully into the distance.

"What's the matter?" Anderson asked anxiously.

"Just thinking."

The pilot waited, puzzling over the old man's sudden dejection.

"I wonder —" Bradley began. "You know, son, I ain't so sure we did the right thing here."

ANDERSON felt a little queasy, too. An indescribable consideration that had lain dormant at the back of his mind was calling for attention. Now that the cure had been effected, though, he was beginning to recognize what it was that had tried to hold him back.

"Maybe we shouldn't have interfered," he suggested.

"They did seem to be satisfied with their DUO system," Bradley agreed.

"And as scatterbrain as it was," Anderson added thoughtfully, "it did work, didn't it?"

The old man nodded. "Yes. I got the impression they were a pretty happy people — like children — spritely little putpockets."

Anderson and Bradley laughed spuriously. The outburst was punctuated by an instant return of sober expressions.

Anderson straightened. "But we did see some pretty rough poverty, didn't we?"

"It wasn't so rough, I don't suppose. Not when you consider it was self-imposed — and then only by the elite. The average person, no doubt, was much better off."

The pilot drummed the table with his fingers. "I hadn't thought of that. Besides, poverty couldn't have been a permanent feature of the system — not with the kind of surpluses they had knocking around. Eventually, as overproduction got worse, the natives would have been forced to live with more and more luxuries."

They were silent for a long, tense while.

"You know, Walt," Anderson said finally, "I didn't think it would end up like this."

"You mean the looting — and the butler stealing?"

"And the maids and the stable boy swiping the silverware."

"No. I guess they overcorrected."

"And we can be damned sure that the same overcorrection will take place everywhere on the planet."

"But we didn't plan it that way," Bradley protested defensively.

"Maybe not. But it happened just the same. And we caused it." Anderson patted his coat again. "Where's my Subcon?"

"Here, use mine," Bradley said, reaching into his jacket. "Just think — They probably never had

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a crime on Dewonto until now."

The pilot took the emergency signal generator. "The way I see it, they'll quickly make up for lost time. Walt . . ."

"Yes?"

"We're prize bunglers, aren't we?"

"Stinkers would be a better word," the old man said ruefully.

"You suppose it'd help if we didn't call Mother Ship? If we stayed here and — and —"

"And what?"

Anderson shrugged futilely.

"There's nothing we can do now, boy. It was easy to crush the Golden Rule because the Brass Rule was so much more human. The pendulum's already started swinging the other way now. I don't see how we could stop it."

THE pilot sighed. "It would be interesting to see what would have happened. We could have stayed here and let them saddle us with the top jobs — emperor or president or big cheese of the planet."

Bradley straightened his mustache with a stiff finger. "We could have ironed out the few inconsistencies in the system, strengthened their Dewonto culture, kept nagging at them until they consented to higher and higher standards of living."

"But we would have seen to it that they stayed industrious."

"Of course. And we could have shown them how to use their surpulses without surrendering to selfishness and greed," the old man said. "We could have given them a solid foundation."

"And when contact came around again in a couple of thousand years, they would have been strong enough not only to survive, but perhaps even to 'cure' the other culture."

They were pensively silent again.

"No use supposing." Bradley slapped his knees. "Too late to undo what we did."

Anderson returned his attention to the old man's Subcon. "Walt, this thing's broken. The side's caved in."

Bradley looked over. "Oh? Must have crushed it when I fell last night. Use yours."

Anderson rose and explored his pockets again. "Have to find it first. You suppose Gladys would understand if I told her we're sorry about what's happened?"

"She won't realize there's anything to be sorry about until anti-DUO gets in full swing."

"I guess not." Anderson shifted the breakfast plates around, searched behind the chaise longue, then went over to the cocktail cart. "That other Subcon should be around here somewhere."

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Bradley's head still rested languidly between his hands. "If you're going to find it," he said apathetically, "you'd better get a move on. Time's growing short."

The pilot looked on the bookshelves, atop the mantel and between the cushions of several chairs.

Scott!" Bradley called from the veranda. "Look who's back!"

Anderson went outside. Gladys and her father were standing uneasily beside the breakfast table.

"Gladys!" the pilot exclaimed.

"I – I thought that since my court assignment was over," she said haltingly, "that we'd better settle up."

At least, he realized with considerable relief, the girl hadn't been swept up in the tide of anti-DUO.

"And," he guessed, "you came back to give me something for letting you work for the court?"

PAPA Jerrel had wandered around the veranda, gaping at the evidences of wealth. Now he drew back closer to his daughter and Anderson.

"No." The girl glanced down at the flagstone. "Things are different now. *You've* got to give *me* something . . . Papa!"

The pilot's spirits sagged. But then he started as he suddenly became conscious of the tailor's hand slipping into his pocket.

Embarrassed on being discovered, the girl's father withdrew his hand immediately.

Gladys reached into the pocket and pulled out a gold watch, handed it back to her father. "You don't understand. You're not supposed to be putpocketing!"

She drew him aside and began a tedious explanation, accompanied by flourishing hand gestures.

"Mr. Anderson! Mr. Anderson!" It was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, who rounded the corner of the mansion, leading a delegation of businessmen and manufacturers. Waving a printed form, he advanced across the flagstone. "Sign this! Sign this!"

"What is it?" The pilot drew back warily.

Bradley rose. "Never mind, son. Sign it. What difference does it make now?"

Anderson signed.

The delegation, whooping elatedly, marched off.

"Thank you, sir," the president threw back over his shoulder. "You just signed back over to us the downtown stores and offices and Hobo Heights, too."

Bradley shrugged indifferently. "They're really catching on quick to this anti-DUO stuff, aren't they?"

Anderson, glancing through the

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double doors, spied the Subcon SOS signaler — lying on a coffee table. But as he strode toward it, the butler sneaked to the table, swept up the instrument and dumped it swiftly into his pocket.

"Hey!" Anderson shouted.

The butler turned to run. But he stumbled over a hassock and sprawled on the floor. When he regained his feet, he glowered disappointedly and withdrew the Subcon pack from his pocket — piece by piece.

In stunned silence, Anderson became aware of Gladys' low voice and gesturing hands as she continued her explanation to her father.

". . . So now that we realize they were merely dewontoing others as they *wanted others to dewonto them,* it wouldn't be right for us to keep unloading on them. We just decided to stop putpocketing and everything else — as far as *they're* concerned."

PAPA Jerrel nodded understandingly. "I see. But straight dewonto's still the order of the day among everybody else."

"That's right," she said patronizingly. "With them, we pickpocket and trick and grab. It took a while for the average Dewontoite to figure out that was what the spacemen wanted. And it took longer for the industrialists and businessmen to realize it — especially after they misinterpreted Mr. Bradley's and Scott's motives. But now we all know how to treat them."

It took a few moments for Anderson to begin to understand. When he glanced over at the cartographer, Bradley was matching his grin.

"I wouldn't worry about those two busted Subcons," Bradley said, looking at his watch. "It would be too late to use them anyway."

Gladys, still facing her father, shook her head disconsolately. "Actually, we should feel sorry for them. But — well, maybe someday they'll become real Dewontoites, too."

Anderson took his diamond-studded Academy pin from his lapel and crossed over to the girl and her father.

Lacking finesse, he completely bungled the job of getting her handbag open without her knowing it. But before she could pull away, he dropped the pin inside.

"Scott!" she exclaimed happily, apparently not at all regretting being made a putpocket victim.

"You wouldn't happen to know," he asked, taking her arm, "where a guy could find a decrepit, broken-down shack in need of repair, but big enough to raise a family in?"

—DANIEL F. GALOUYE

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GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

THE UGGLIANS by L. M. Fallaw. Philosophical Library, New York, $3.00

AN astonishing release from a publishing house that has become noted for the richness of its non-fiction and the poverty of its S-F.

Ugg I, known affectionately as Uggli to his converts, is a 7½ foot, 450 lb. central African ruler who has evolved the Word. In return for fine promises of future welfare, mankind will hand over valuable objects, he discovers. In a vision, he is called to America to spread the Word of the Great Black Father. Two hundred and fifty suns later, his female consort and he sail their canoe into New York harbor, past the huge idol of a torch-carrying female. "Devil-worshipers," he says.

After establishing himself in a tent in Central Park, he proceeds to convert the natives so successfully that he acquires the services of a business manager, formerly with the biggest evangelist, Johnny Tuesday. Only a handful can withstand him, including a critical reporter on whom he uses his most persuasive methods.

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"Get saved," Ugg begs. "Get lost," the reporter says, but declines a game of buffum with Ugg, played with twenty-pound clubs until a winner is declared — the one who stays alive.

This is a lashing book, but as worth reading as Dean Swift's stinging satires.

THE NAKED SUN by Isaac Asimov. Doubleday & Co., Inc. New York, $2.95

R. DANEEL OLIVAW, as we know from *The Caves of Steel,* is a collateral descendant of *I, Robot,* not to mention *Adam Link,* which I'd rather not. He is a completely humanoid robot detective. In fact, to be truthful, he's more human at times than his partner, Elijah Baley, the Earth detective who is called for by the ex-colonist Spacers, now independent nationals who despise the mother planet. For some hidden political reasons, the contemptible Earthman has been summoned to Solaria to solve a murder that could have been committed by only one person.

Baley, reared in the teeming underground Terran cities, is afflicted with agoraphobia like all Earthmen. In turn, all Spacers have their phobias based on their underpopulated existence. Knowing this, Baley attempts to refuse the assignment, but he cannot. This is a unique opportunity for quarantined Earth to acquire vital information about its former colonists and future adversaries, the Spacers. Baley must serve a two-pronged purpose.

Caves of Steel had a hypnotic quality because of the graphic picture that Asimov drew of the enwombed troglodític society of the future. His current book, in comparison, is completely alien in environment and adds up to an interesting exercise in scientific detection.

However, in that direction, Asimov appears to be laying the groundwork for a new category of science fiction, the S-F detective story. It is strange that Asimov should be the pioneer, since so many of our favorite authors double in the detective-mystery field.

THE FROZEN YEAR by James Blish. Ballantine Books, New York, $2.75

ON the flyleaf, Ballantine calls this a "contemporary novel" as distinguished from Blish's science fiction output. Don't you believe it. Martians and missing proto-planets are something less — or considerably more — than contemporary.

Blish has succeeded in writing

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an exasperating book. He starts as if penning the satirical novel of the year. The story takes place during the International Geophysical Year and concerns the tribulations of a science writer assigned to a fantastic polar expedition. The expedition leader, a Charles Atlas type, is a publicity hound married to a Kathleen Windsor type historical-novel writer.

Quite a combination.

The expedition proper is composed of scientific misfits and incompetents. It has received its inadequate financial backing from numerous commercial firms who hope to win cheap advertising for their products by what might be called "Polar Promotion." Then IGY comes along and gives official sanction.

So far, Blish stays on solid ground.

His coldly sarcastic style and his punny corporate names prepare his reader for a light-hearted whacky job. But he switches in mid-ice, so to speak, and winds up with a serious adventure-tragedy. No great crime, certainly: Bernard Wolfe ran amok stylistically in *Limbo*, yet what emerged was an enormous tour de force. One cannot say as much for *Frozen Year*, but it will make for cool, adventurous reading on a sweltering day.

EMPIRE OF THE ATOM by A. E. Van Vogt. Shasta Publishers, Chicago, $3.00

A RETURN to publishing of one of the pioneers in the field is a welcome event in itself. It could be wished that the effort were deserving of worthier fruit, but still the occasion is a cheering one.

Van Vogt's book is based on material from *Astounding* of a decade ago and the intervening years haven't altered my opinion of this work.

You may recall that he envisages a feudal culture, 10,000 years or so in our future, that has inherited atomic energy and space travel as well as a shattered world from its distant ancestors.

If meant as a frolicsome burlesque, the paradoxes of such a societal hash could be swallowed. After all, a spaceship represents more than merely a mode of travel. The requisite technology, not for creation, but merely for maintenance, thoroughly destroys one of the book's intended high-spots, in which a fleet of spaceships makes a strafing run over the enemy, loosing flights of arrows from point-blank range.

It should bring to mind the original movie of "Connecticut Yankee," the delightful scene in which Will Rogers leads a

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cavalry charge of miniature Austin automobiles. It should, but it doesn't — Van Vogt's tongue was anywhere but in his cheek, where it belonged.

THE RANGER BOYS IN SPACE by Hal Clement. L. C. Page & Co., Boston, $2.75

SOME will say that Clement has reached his true audience with this, his first juvenile. Concensus has it that his youngsters and aliens emerge as humans, while his adult humans emerge as alien. It's not for want of trying; when depicting adult humans, Clement has been very trying indeed.

His deliberate title is unequaled since *Starship on Saddle Mountain.* You see, "Ranger" is the surname of Bart and Dart.

The boys and their friend, Peter Ashburn, are wards of their Uncle Jim, an explorer and scientist. The story starts with the failure of the space satellite and rocket projects and the return of their invalided guardian. Because of malfunction of the inner ear during weightlessness, Uncle Jim has attempted to inure himself to zero gravity at the station along with others and all have succumbed, their innate balance chronically disturbed.

Peter proposes that younger people might be more adaptable, since fewer years have been spent believing the evidence of the senses. In desperation, Uncle Jim uses the boys and a young spy as guinea pigs.

It is almost a truism that Clement's books never smile, but he pens a credible, workmanlike and always interesting yarn. First of a series.

NOTES . . . *Growth of Mechanical Power* by Miles Tomalin, Roy Publishers, N. Y., $2.50, delineates the growth of power from Man's first "machine" — tamed animals. Graphically illustrated and clearly written and documented . . . *Atomic Energy* by E. C. Roberson, Philosophical Library, N. Y., $4.75, like the above book also British printed, is also intended as an easily understood text for the layman . . . *Maya Art and Civilization* by Herbert J. Spinden, Falcon's Wing Press, Colo., $10, is a big, beautiful volume devoted to one of the most advanced antique civilizations, already in a state of decay by Columbus's time. Among other astronomical feats, they evolved a more accurate calendar than the one we now use!

— FLOYD C. GALE

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MAKE ME AN OFFER

By CON BLOMBERG

Fellow City Mgrs., only you can help me — progress has made "Go Fight City Hall" a battle cry!

Illustrated by DILLON

TO: ALL CITY MANAGERS
FROM: ROSS RO, NEW YORK CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: GELATIN MOLDS

WELL, boys, this is going to be rather an informal communication because I think there's a serious lesson for you in a situation we had here recently. I might as well be the first to tell you about it. You'll hear about it soon enough anyway. Frankly, I'm hoping you'll have a heart and lend a brother City Manager a hand.

As you boys know, I was re-elected last April to my post as City Manager for another four years and I felt pretty good about it. So good that I was looking around for something to do which would sort of let the voters of little

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old New York know how I felt about them. Most of you have met my political assistant Charlie Tight — or, rather, my ex-political assistant. Charlie was looking around, too, and he came up with the idea of covering over Central Park.

We have never covered over Central Park with the perma-plast roof like the rest of the city because it is a fairly large area and there wasn't any public demand for it. So naturally it rains and snows there and we spend a lot of dough keeping the grass cut and what have you. It's a popular spot with a lot of folks.

Charlie figured — and I must admit that I agreed with him — that covering over Central Park was quite an idea. Controlled conditions would let the grass grow only so much and the temperature would remain constant. No rain or snow except from 1 A.M. to 3 A.M., when we would put in a little artificial precipitation to keep the greenery going. Plenty of nice air-conditioned air. Eternal spring. Really up-to-date.

We put it through the computer down at the Civic Machine and figured it would cost only about 25 hundred million. It looked real good. You see, we recently got a new addition to the Civic Machine and the manufacturer gave us a deal on a new model Projector for the whole city. It makes constant forecasts on practically everything we need from moment to moment. It doesn't wait for a Tech to run the data thru it. Saves a lot of time because it's directly connected with Supply.

This Projector is so good that we have been able to cut down on expenses about 20 hundred million in only two years. I figured this would easily pay for the perma-plast roof over good old Central Park.

TO MAKE a long story short, I went before the people on TV and told the whole story. Charlie had the TV Techs mock up a scene of what it would look like and we had models posed in family scenes and the like. Should have gone over like a shot — and it would have, except for this screwball Hatty Dakkon.

It wasn't an hour after I had made my broadcast that my secretary announced this Mrs. Hatty Dakkon. She proved to be a young matron type with pretty good legs and a chip on her shoulder. She was against roofing Central Park.

Well, you boys know how it goes. Always some crank who doesn't like things changed, and after they have blown off steam, they quiet down and you can go ahead and do the work.

So I let this Hatty Dakkon talk on and on until my ears were limp from listening.

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She said she was against roofing Central Park because it would be just like every other place in the City — weatherproof, air-conditioned and humidity controlled.

She figured that children should have some place where they could feel the wind on their faces and the falling of rain and snow and the smell of air as it was in nature.

She said that was the only way most of our children could ever, *ever* find the ties with the past that were sacred.

She quoted poetry about the wind and the rain in your hair, and on and on and on.

Finally I let her talk off her head of steam and she got calmed down so I could tell her: "Thank you, madam, for this expression of your opinion. You can rest assured that I will do everything within my power and the power of the Civic Machine to see to it that anything possible is done."

Her head came up like a rocket at blastoff.

"Hold it!" she said. "You can't put me off with that old one — that's Standard Answer No. 1 in the City Manager's guidebook and I ain't buying it, Buster. I used to work at the Civic Machine myself, so I know all the Standard Answers backward and forward."

"Well, I assure you, madam —" I said.

"Don't hand me that stuff again. What I want is for you to call off the Civic Machine and quit trying to roof the only place left where our children can feel the open air and sunshine."

"I see. You aren't going to be satisfied with anything else," I said.

"That's right."

"I'm sorry, but that's impossible We have programmed the roofing job for next month on the Civic Machine and we can't change it now."

"That, Mr. Ro, is a lie," she said, leaning across my desk and sticking a slim white finger under my nose. "I know you can change it in five minutes if you want to."

"It won't be changed," I said.

"Is that your final word?"

"Final."

"Mr. Ro," she said, putting her hands on her hips, "I think you'll be sorry."

She headed for the door, only to turn around and ask me if my wife was at home.

"I suppose she is," I said, "but don't bother her — she takes no interest in Civic affairs."

I don't have to tell you boys that I dismissed the lady from my mind and went on to other more important matters. Or so I thought.

WHEN I got home that night, I didn't say anything about Hatty Dakkon. My wife is inclined to see things differently than I do and I had a hunch she

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would side with Hatty. Consequently, rather than get into a discussion, I just let it slide.

Not too many of you boys know my wife, but those who do know that she is like so many other women — not particularly interested in any Civic Machine. Just so she gets what she wants when she dials the home connection to the Machine is all she is interested in.

That night, though, my wife surprised me by having a burning interest in the Civic Machine. She wanted to know all about it. How it produces the consumer products. How it gets them to the living area. How it knows what to order. And she especially quizzed me about the new Projector.

When I asked her why she wanted to know about all that after 15 years of married life, she just smiled sweetly and said that naturally she was interested in my work.

NEXT day, I brought home a sample programming sheet for her to see and damned if she didn't dismiss it with a sniff as being too complicated and boring.

Go figure women out!

That night, we had two molded gelatin dishes. The round kind with a hole in the center.

The next night, we had the same kind of supper, except that instead of fish and something in gelatin, we had meat and something in gelatin. Same sort of deal for dessert.

The next day, I got my first tip that something was up when Willie Kipe, the caster for NYC-TV, called me and asked about the protest on the Central Park roofing proposal, saying he got the item from his woman assistant. I said it didn't amount to much and that the project was going ahead on schedule.

I caught Willie's cast that night and he treated it in a light manner which really made me smile. I should have been crying instead.

That night, we had some more molded gelatin, only in square molds this time. Same thing the next day. I figured it was time to take a stand — a diplomatic one, of course.

"Honey," I said as I sat toying with my food, "can't we have different dishes every night? I'm getting tired of all this gelatin junk. How about a steak?"

"But, darling, gelatin is very good for you. It's simply crammed full of protein and all the girls at the club are eating lots of gelatin."

"But I don't like gelatin *that* well," I said.

"I don't, either, but it's *so* good for *both* of us," she said with her best don't-try-to-argue-Mother-knows-best smile.

I had a steak that night after she went to bed.

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THE next day, I got a call from the head of the warehousing division over at Civic, asking me if I had any preference on warehousing molds.

"What molds?" I wanted to know.

"Well, let's see," he said. "We've got 3.5 million round gelatin molds with a hole in the center. We've got 5.6 million square gelatin molds — no center hole. And 7.3 million figure-eight gelatin molds and I understand there's a hell of a lot of deep-dish gelatin molds coming up tomorrow from Supply at Schenectady."

"Why in hell have we got all those molds?"

"Don't know," he said. "Civic Machine ordered them, so I suppose we need them. Where do you want the storing done? Thought we might run up one of those new Kiosk warehouses out east if you have no objection."

"Put it anywhere you want," I said, switching off.

Before I could get back to work, there was a call from Stats.

"Got a little problem down here, Mr. Ro," said the Tech. "Schenectady is sending us premium billing on an over-order of plastic."

"How much is the premium?"

"Quite a little, Boss — about 10 hundred million or thereabouts. I checked with them and the reason for the extra strong premium is because they had to rebuild the factory — let's see which one that was — oh, yes, cold-molding dishes division of the Cooking Receptacle plant. What do you want me to do — enter a protest saying we aren't responsible and get it over to Fed Court where they can pro-rate it over the other cities?"

"Nope, I guess you'd just better pay it."

The chips were falling into place now and I didn't like what they were building for me.

As soon as I switched off, I put in a call to my head Tech at the Civic Machine and asked for a rundown on the food ordered for supper for the past six or eight nights. It took a while, but when I got it back, it was enough to make my hair curl and uncurl in three-quarter time.

First thing I did was call my wife and ask her what we were having for dinner that night.

"We're having your favorite — steak and kidney pie, dear," she said in that innocent-little-girl voice that means there's trouble ahead.

"No more of those gelatin dishes, sweet?"

"No more of that awful gelatin, darling. I'm so tired of it. But I did order a pair of nice shears today — you know, sweetheart, scissors?"

"Yes, dear. That's nice," I said, trying to smooth down the hair on the back of my neck, which was standing straight up.

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"The Civic Machine didn't have any scissors, darling, so I told it go ahead and get me a pair regardless of the wait. That was all right, wasn't it, dear?"

"Fine, dear, fine."

"I can't imagine why the Civic Machine should be out of just plain old six-inch scissors, can you?"

"Just can't imagine, darling. Good-by."

"Good-by, sweetie."

MY HAND was shaking when I called the Tech at the Civic Machine and asked him to check up on the orders for scissors.

It took a minute or two, and when he came back, his face was puzzled.

"Funny thing, Boss—there is an order for just under 10 million pairs of scissors. That's more than we have had in the past seven or eight years. All ordered last night. There must be a mistake somewhere. I'll run it through again and have a test made of the orders section."

"Never mind. Just do this," I said. "Fix up the Projector so it doesn't send out any order for scissors and cancel any order that has been placed." I was wringing wet with sweat. It was going to be a close one.

Believe me, boys, I didn't waste any time getting on FAX and TV, telling everyone that there had been a change in plans due to public demand and we weren't going to be able to roof over Central Park after all. I suggested that, as long as the administration had cooperated, the people should cooperate on the matter.

An hour later, I called the Civic Machine and asked for a check on scissors. The orders had dropped to a mere 5.4 million. Way above normal, but the way the cancellations were coming in, it was obvious that it would be within reasonable proportions soon.

Just in case some of you missed the by-play on that, let me sketch it in for you as I found it out later.

It seems that this Hatty Dakkon had organized a phone campaign on the Let Our Children Enjoy Nature theme which went over big with the women. Every woman called five woman friends and these five called five and so on. You figure it out — with geometrical progression, it doesn't take long to get in touch with about 14-15 million women. Not as fast as TV, maybe, but a darn sight more effective and thorough.

It was the talk of the women's world and we men didn't even know about it until the battle was all over.

This horde of women, led by Hatty Dakkon, agreed that they would order the same dish—gelatin in a round mold on the same night.

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You know what this can do to a good Projector. It just went frantic.

Projectors work on the basis of average demand for anything, and with an average demand for round mold gelatin foods two nights in a row of about 10-11 million, it went ahead and ordered a whole conveyor-load of mold dishes from Schenectady.

The next time, it was square molds for two nights; and the next, it was figure-eight for two nights and then a double shot of deep-dish.

THEY have a new Projector up at Schenectady, same as we have, and it ordered an increase in the size of the mold-making factory based on our demand (which was run in with everyone else's demand). Then, when the demand didn't come through from us and from the other cities in the area, we had to pay the premium for building the new factory.

The scissors business would have bankrupted us completely. Think of it—millions of pairs of steel scissors in the year 2006! Think of the premium for increase in size of factory, prospecting the planets, mining, spaceship freight rates, and so forth. That's why I was glad to give up the Central Park project.

Well, to make a long story short, we aren't going near Central Park. And Charlie, who originally thought of the idea, is probably out there now, wondering why he did it.

Now in closing, I hope all the rest of you who have had a good laugh will sober up and sympathize with me and see what you can do about ordering gelatin molds from us. We'll ship them out pronto—we have a large supply—and no reasonable offer will be refused. Please, fellows!

— CON BLOMBERG

Scientology — the technology of the human being that gives him the capability of his future . . .

read

SCIENTOLOGY

The Fundamentals of Thought

by L. Ron Hubbard

nuclear physicist and one of the great science fiction writers of all time. The book from which they get their know-how of other life forms — the book that confronts the basics of life from which all life forms develop. . . .

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THE MAN

No one, least of all Martin, could dispute that a man's life should be guarded by his kin—but by those who hadn't been born yet?

Illustrated by DILLON

NOBODY in the neighborhood was surprised when Martin's mother disappeared and Ninian came to take care of him. Mothers had a way of disappearing around those parts and the kids were often better off without them. Martin was no exception. He'd never had it this good while he was living with his old lady. As for his father, Martin had never had one. He'd been a war baby, born of one of the tides of soldiers—enemies

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OUTSIDE

By EVELYN E. SMITH

and allies, both — that had engulfed the country in successive waves and bought or taken the women. So there was no trouble that way.

Sometimes he wondered who Ninian really was. Obviously that story about her coming from the future was just a gag. Besides, if she really was his great-great-grand-daughter, as she said, why would she tell him to call her *"Aunt Ninian"*? Maybe he was only eleven, but he'd been around

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and he knew just what the score was. At first he'd thought maybe she was some new kind of social worker, but she acted a little too crazy for that.

He loved to bait her, as he had loved to bait his mother. It was safer with Ninian, though, because when he pushed her too far, she would cry instead of mopping up the floor with him.

"But I can't understand," he would say, keeping his face straight. "Why do you have to come from the future to protect me against your cousin Conrad?"

"Because he's coming to kill you."

"Why should he kill me? I ain't done him nothing."

Ninian sighed. "He's dissatisfied with the current social order and killing you is part of an elaborate plan he's formulated to change it. You wouldn't understand."

"You're damn right. I *don't* understand. What's it all about in straight gas?"

"Oh, just don't ask any questions," Ninian said petulantly. "When you get older, someone will explain the whole thing to you."

SO MARTIN held his peace, because, on the whole, he liked things the way they were. Ninian really was the limit, though. All the people he knew lived in scabrous tenement apartments like his, but she seemed to think it was disgusting.

"So if you don't like it, clean it up," he suggested.

She looked at him as if he were out of his mind.

"Hire a maid, then!" he jeered.

And darned if that dope didn't go out and get a woman to come clean up the place! He was so embarrassed, he didn't even dare show his face in the streets — especially with the women buttonholing him and demanding to know what gave. They tried talking to Ninian, but she certainly knew how to give them the cold shoulder.

One day the truant officer came to ask why Martin hadn't been coming to school. Very few of the neighborhood kids attended classes very regularly, so this was just routine. But Ninian didn't know that and she went into a real tizzy, babbling that Martin had been sick and would make up the work. Martin nearly did get sick from laughing so hard inside.

But he laughed out of the other side of his mouth when she went out and hired a private tutor for him. A tutor — in that neighborhood! Martin had to beat up every kid on the block before he could walk a step without hearing "Fancy Pants!" yelled after him.

Ninian worried all the time. It wasn't that she cared what these people thought of her, for she

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made no secret of regarding them as little better than animals, but she was shy of attracting attention. There were an awful lot of people in that neighborhood who felt exactly the same way, only she didn't know that, either. She was really pretty dumb, Martin thought, for all her fancy lingo.

"It's so hard to think these things out without any prior practical application to go by," she told him.

He nodded, knowing what she meant was that everything was coming out wrong. But he didn't try to help her; he just watched to see what she'd do next. Already he had begun to assume the detached role of a spectator.

When it became clear that his mother was never going to show up again, Ninian bought one of those smallish, almost identical houses that mushroom on the fringes of a city after every war, particularly where intensive bombing has created a number of desirable building sites.

"This is a much better neighborhood for a boy to grow up in," she declared. "Besides, it's easier to keep an eye on you here."

And keep an eye on him she did — she or a rather foppish young man who came to stay with them occasionally. Martin was told to call him Uncle Raymond.

From time to time, there were other visitors — Uncles Ives and Bartholomew and Olaf, Aunts Ottillie and Grania and Lalage, and many more — all cousins to one another, he was told, all descendants of his.

MARTIN was never left alone for a minute. He wasn't allowed to play with the other kids in the new neighborhood. Not that their parents would have let them, anyway. The adults obviously figured that if a one-car family hired private tutors for their kid, there must be something pretty wrong with him. So Martin and Ninian were just as conspicuous as before. But he didn't tip her off. She was grown up; she was supposed to know better than he did.

He lived well. He had food to eat that he'd never dreamed of before, warm clothes that no one had ever worn before him. He was surrounded by more luxury than he knew what to do with.

The furniture was the latest New Grand Rapids African modern. There were tidy, colorful Picasso and Braque prints on the walls. And every inch of the floor was modestly covered by carpeting, though the walls were mostly unabashed glass. There were hot water and heat all the time and a freezer well stocked with food — somewhat erratically chosen, for Ninian didn't know much about meals.

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The non-glass part of the house was of neat, natural-toned wood, with a neat green lawn in front and a neat parti-colored garden in back.

Martin missed the old neighborhood, though. He missed having other kids to play with. He even missed his mother. Sure, she hadn't given him enough to eat and she'd beaten him up so hard sometimes that she'd nearly killed him — but then there had also been times when she'd hugged and kissed him and soaked his collar with her tears. She'd done all she could for him, supporting him in the only way she knew how — and if respectable society didn't like it, the hell with respectable society.

From Ninian and her cousins, there was only an impersonal kindness. They made no bones about the fact that they were there only to carry out a rather unpleasant duty. Though they were in the house with him, in their minds and in their talk they were living in another world — a world of warmth and peace and plenty where nobody worked, except in the government service or the essential professions. And they seemed to think even that kind of job was pretty low-class, though better than actually doing anything with the hands.

In their world, Martin came to understand, nobody worked with hands; everything was done by machinery. All the people ever did was wear pretty clothes and have good times and eat all they wanted. There was no devastation, no war, no unhappiness, none of the concomitants of normal living.

It was then that Martin began to realize that either the whole lot of them were insane, or what Ninian had told him at first was the truth. They came from the future.

WHEN Martin was sixteen, Raymond took him aside for the talk Ninian had promised five years before.

"The whole thing's all my brother Conrad's fault. You see, he's an idealist," Raymond explained, pronouncing the last word with distaste.

Martin nodded gravely. He was a quiet boy now, his brief past a dim and rather ridiculous memory. Who could ever imagine him robbing a grocery store or wielding a broken bottle now? He still was rather undersized and he'd read so much that he'd weakened his eyes and had to wear glasses. His face was pallid, because he spent little time in the sun, and his speech rather overbred, his mentors from the future having carefully eradicated all current vulgarities.

"And Conrad really got upset

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over the way Earth has been exploiting the not so intelligent life-forms on the other planets," Raymond continued. "Which *is* distressing—though, of course, it's not as if they were people. Besides, the government has been talking about passing laws to do away with the — well, abuses and things like that, and I'm sure someday everything will come out all right. However, Conrad is so impatient."

"I thought, in your world, machines did all the work," Martin suggested.

"I've told you — our world is precisely the same as this one!" Raymond snapped. "We just come a couple of centuries or so later, that's all. But remember, our interests are identical. We're virtually the same people . . . although it is amazing what a difference two hundred odd years of progress and polish can make in a species, isn't it?"

He continued more mildly: "However, even you ought to be able to understand that we can't make machinery without metal. We need food. All that sort of thing comes from the out-system planets. And, on those worlds, it's far cheaper to use native labor than to ship out all that expensive machinery. After all, if we didn't give the natives jobs, how would they manage to live?"

"How did they live before? Come to think of it, if you don't work, how do *you* live now? . . . I don't mean in the now for me, but the now for you," Martin explained laboriously. It was so difficult to live in the past and think in the future.

"I'm trying to talk to you as if you were an adult," Raymond said, "but if you will persist in these childish interruptions —"

"I'm sorry," Martin said.

But he wasn't, for by now he had little respect left for any of his descendants. They were all exceedingly handsome and cultivated young people, with superior educations, smooth ways of speaking and considerable self-confidence, but they just weren't very bright. And he had discovered that Raymond was perhaps the most intelligent of the lot. Somewhere in that relatively short span of time, his line or — more frightening — his race had lost something vital.

Unaware of the near-contempt in which his young ancestor held him, Raymond went on blandly: "Anyhow, Conrad took it upon himself to feel particularly guilty, because, he decided, if it hadn't been for the fact that our great-grandfather discovered the super-drive, we might never have reached the stars. Which is ridiculous — his feeling guilty, I mean. Perhaps a great-grandfather is responsible for his great-grandchil-

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dren, but a great-grandchild can hardly be held accountable for his great-grandfather."

"How about a great-great-grandchild?" Martin couldn't help asking.

RAYMOND flushed a delicate pink. "Do you want to hear the rest of this or don't you?"

"Oh, I do!" Martin said. He had pieced the whole thing together for himself long since, but he wanted to hear how Raymond would put it.

"Unfortunately, Professor Farkas has just perfected the time transmitter. Those government scientists are so infernally officious – always inventing such senseless things. It's supposed to be hush-hush, but you know how news will leak out when one is always desperate for a fresh topic of conversation."

Anyhow, Raymond went on to explain, Conrad had bribed one of Farkas' assistants for a set of the plans. Conrad's idea had been to go back in time and "eliminate" their common great-grandfather. In that way, there would be no space-drive, and, hence, the Terrestrials would never get to the other planets and oppress the local aborigines.

"Sounds like a good way of dealing with the problem," Martin observed.

Raymond looked annoyed. "It's the *adolescent* way," he said, "to do away with it, rather than find a solution. Would you destroy a whole society in order to root out a single injustice?"

"Not if it were a good one otherwise."

"Well, there's your answer. Conrad got the apparatus built, or perhaps he built it himself. One doesn't inquire too closely into such matters. But when it came to the point, Conrad couldn't bear the idea of eliminating our great-grandfather – because our great-grandfather was such a *good* man, you know." Raymond's expressive upper lip curled. "So Conrad decided to go further back still and get rid of his great-grandfather's father – who'd been, by all accounts, a pretty worthless character."

"That would be me, I suppose," Martin said quietly.

Raymond turned a deep rose. "Well, doesn't that just go to prove you mustn't believe everything you hear?" The next sentence tumbled out in a rush. "I wormed the whole thing out of him and all of us – the other cousins and me – held a council of war, as it were, and we decided it was our moral duty to go back in time ourselves and protect you." He beamed at Martin.

The boy smiled slowly. "Of course. You had to. If Conrad succeeded in *eliminating* me, then

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none of you would exist, would you?"

Raymond frowned. Then he shrugged cheerfully. "Well, you didn't really suppose we were going to all this trouble and expense out of sheer altruism, did you?" he asked, turning on the charm which all the cousins possessed to a consternating degree.

MARTIN had, of course, no illusions on that score; he had learned long ago that nobody did anything for nothing. But saying so was unwise.

"We bribed another set of plans out of another of the professor's assistants," Raymond continued, as if Martin had answered, "and — ah — induced a handicraft enthusiast to build the gadget for us."

Induced, Martin knew, could have meant anything from blackmail to the use of the iron maiden.

"Then we were all ready to forestall Conrad. If one of us guarded you night and day, he would never be able to carry out his plot. So we made our counterplan, set the machine as far back as it would go — and here we are!"

"I see," Martin said.

Raymond didn't seem to think he really did. "After all," he pointed out defensively, "whatever our motives, it has turned into a good thing for you. Nice home, cultured companions, all the contemporary conveniences, plus some handy anachronisms — I don't see what more you could ask for. You're getting the best of all possible worlds. Of course Ninian *was* a ninny to locate in a mercantile suburb where any little thing out of the way will cause talk. How thankful I am that our era has completely disposed of the mercantiles —"

"What did you do with them?" Martin asked.

But Raymond rushed on: "Soon as Ninian goes and I'm in full charge, we'll get a more isolated place and run it on a far grander scale. Ostentation—that's the way to live here and now; the richer you are, the more eccentricity you can get away with. And," he added, "I might as well be as comfortable as possible while I suffer through this wretched historical stint."

"So Ninian's going," said Martin, wondering why the news made him feel curiously desolate. Because, although he supposed he liked her in a remote kind of way, he had no fondness for her — or she, he knew, for him.

"Well, five years is rather a long stretch for any girl to spend in exile," Raymond explained, "even though our life spans are a bit longer than yours. Besides, you're getting too old now to be under petticoat government." He looked inquisitively at Martin.

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"You're not going to go all weepy and make a scene when she leaves, are you?"

"No . . ." Martin said hesitantly. "Oh, I suppose I will miss her. But we aren't very close, so it won't make a real difference." That was the sad part: he already knew it wouldn't make a difference.

Raymond clapped him on the shoulder. "I knew you weren't a sloppy sentimentalist like Conrad. Though you do have rather a look of him, you know."

Suddenly that seemed to make Conrad real. Martin felt a vague stirring of alarm. He kept his voice composed, however. "How do you plan to protect me when he comes?"

"Well, each one of us is armed to the teeth, of course," Raymond said with modest pride, displaying something that looked like a child's combination spaceman's gun and death ray, but which, Martin had no doubt, was a perfectly genuine—and lethal—weapon. "And we've got a rather elaborate burglar alarm system."

Martin inspected the system and made one or two changes in the wiring which, he felt, would increase its efficiency. But still he was dubious. "Maybe it'll work on someone coming from outside this *house,* but do you think it will work on someone coming from outside this *time?*"

"Never fear—it has a temporal radius," Raymond replied. "Factory guarantee and all that."

"Just to be on the safe side," Martin said, "I think I'd better have one of those guns, too."

"A splendid idea!" enthused Raymond. "I was just about to think of that myself!"

WHEN it came time for the parting, it was Ninian who cried—tears at her own inadequacy, Martin knew, not of sorrow. He was getting skillful at understanding his descendants, far better than they at understanding him. But then they never really tried. Ninian kissed him wetly on the cheek and said she was sure everything would work out all right and that she'd come see him again. She never did, though, except at the very last.

Raymond and Martin moved into a luxurious mansion in a remote area. The site proved a well-chosen one; when the Second Atomic War came, half a dozen years later, they weren't touched. Martin was never sure whether this had been sheer luck or expert planning. Probably luck, because his descendants were exceedingly inept planners.

Few people in the world then could afford to live as stylishly as Martin and his guardian. The place not only contained every possible convenience and gadget

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but was crammed with bibelots and antiques, carefully chosen by Raymond and disputed by Martin, for, to the man from the future, all available artifacts were antiques. Otherwise, Martin accepted his new surroundings. His sense of wonder had become dulled by now and the pink pseudo-Spanish castle —"architecturally dreadful, of course," Raymond had said, "but so hilariously typical"— impressed him far less than had the suburban split-level aquarium.

"How about a moat?" Martin suggested when they first came. "It seems to go with a castle."

"Do you think a moat could stop Conrad?" Raymond asked, amused.

"No," Martin smiled, feeling rather silly, "but it would make the place seem safer somehow."

The threat of Conrad was beginning to make him grow more and more nervous. He got Raymond's permission to take two suits of armor that stood in the front hall and present them to a local museum, because several times he fancied he saw them move. He also became an adept with the ray gun and changed the surrounding landscape quite a bit with it, until Raymond warned that this might lead Conrad to them.

During those early years, Martin's tutors were exchanged for the higher-degreed ones that were now needful. The question inevitably arose of what the youth's vocation in that life was going to be. At least twenty of the cousins came back through time to hold one of their vigorous family councils. Martin was still young enough to enjoy such occasions, finding them vastly superior to all other forms of entertainment.

"THIS sort of problem wouldn't arise in our day, Martin," Raymond commented as he took his place at the head of the table, "because, unless one specifically feels a call to some profession or other, one just — well, drifts along happily."

"Ours is a wonderful world," Grania sighed at Martin. "I only wish we could take you there. I'm sure you would like it."

"Don't be a fool, Grania!" Raymond snapped. "Well, Martin, have you made up your mind what you want to be?"

Martin affected to think. "A physicist," he said, not without malice. "Or perhaps an engineer."

There was a loud, excited chorus of dissent. He chuckled inwardly.

"Can't do that," Ives said. "Might pick up some concepts from us. Don't know how; none of us knows a thing about science. But it could happen. Subconscious osmosis, if there is such a thing.

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That way, you might invent something ahead of time. And the fellow we got the plans from particularly cautioned us against that. Changing history. Dangerous."

"Might mess up our time frightfully," Bartholomew contributed, "though, to be perfectly frank, I can't quite understand how."

"I am not going to sit down and explain the whole thing to you all over again, Bart!" Raymond said impatiently. "Well, Martin?"

"What would you suggest?" Martin asked.

"How about becoming a painter? Art is eternal. And quite gentlemanly. Besides, artists are always expected to be either behind or ahead of their times."

"Furthermore," Ottillie added, "one more artist couldn't make much difference in history. There were so many of them all through the ages."

Martin couldn't hold back his question. "What *was* I, actually, in that other time?"

There was a chilly silence.

"Let's not talk about it, dear," Lalage finally said. "Let's just be thankful we've saved you from *that!*"

So drawing teachers were engaged and Martin became a very competent second-rate artist. He knew he would never be able to achieve first rank because, even though he was still so young, his work was almost purely intellectual. The only emotion he seemed able to feel was fear — the ever-present fear that someday he would turn a corridor and walk into a man who looked like him — a man who wanted to kill him for the sake of an ideal.

But the fear did not show in Martin's pictures. They were pretty pictures.

COUSIN Ives — now that Martin was older, he was told to call the descendants *cousin* — next assumed guardianship. Ives took his responsibilities more seriously than the others did. He even arranged to have Martin's work shown at an art gallery. The paintings received critical approval, but failed to evoke any enthusiasm. The modest sale they enjoyed was mostly to interior decorators. Museums were not interested.

"Takes time," Ives tried to reassure him. "One day they'll be buying your pictures, Martin. Wait and see."

Ives was the only one of the descendants who seemed to think of Martin as an individual. When his efforts to make contact with the other young man failed, he got worried and decided that what Martin needed was a change of air and scenery.

"'Course you can't go on the Grand Tour. Your son hasn't in-

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vented space travel yet. But we can go see this world. What's left of it. Tourists always like ruins best, anyway."

So he drew on the family's vast future resources and bought a yacht, which Martin christened *The Interregnum*. They traveled about from sea to ocean and from ocean to sea, touching at various ports and making trips inland. Martin saw the civilized world — mostly in fragments; the nearly intact semi-civilized world and the uncivilized world, much the same as it had been for centuries. It was like visiting an enormous museum; he couldn't seem to identify with his own time any more.

The other cousins appeared to find the yacht a congenial headquarters, largely because they could spend so much time far away from the contemporary inhabitants of the planet and relax and be themselves. So they never moved back to land. Martin spent the rest of his life on *The Interregnum*. He felt curiously safer from Conrad there, although there was no valid reason why an ocean should stop a traveler through time.

More cousins were in residence at once than ever before, because they came for the ocean voyage. They spent most of their time aboard ship, giving each other parties and playing an *avant-*

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garde form of shuffleboard and gambling on future sporting events. That last usually ended in a brawl, because one cousin was sure to accuse another of having got advance information about the results.

Martin didn't care much for their company and associated with them only when not to have done so would have been palpably rude. And, though they were gregarious young people for the most part, they didn't court his society. He suspected that he made them feel uncomfortable.

HE RATHER liked Ives, though. Sometimes the two of them would be alone together; then Ives would tell Martin of the future world he had come from. The picture drawn by Raymond and Ninian had not been entirely accurate, Ives admitted. True, there was no war or poverty on Earth proper, but that was because there were only a couple of million people left on the planet. It was an enclave for the highly privileged, highly interbred aristocracy, to which Martin's descendants belonged by virtue of their distinguished ancestry.

"Rather feudal, isn't it?" Martin asked.

Ives agreed, adding that the system had, however, been deliberately planned, rather than the result of haphazard natural development. Everything potentially unpleasant, like the mercantiles, had been deported.

"Not only natives livin' on the other worlds," Ives said as the two of them stood at the ship's rail, surrounded by the limitless expanse of some ocean or other. "People, too. Mostly lower classes, except for officials and things. With wars and want and suffering," he added regretfully, "same as in your day . . . Like now, I mean," he corrected himself. "Maybe it *is* worse, the way Conrad thinks. More planets for us to make trouble on. Three that were habitable aren't any more. Bombed. Very thorough job."

"Oh," Martin murmured, trying to sound shocked, horrified — interested, even.

"Sometimes I'm not altogether sure Conrad was wrong," Ives said, after a pause. "Tried to keep us from getting to the stars, hurting the people — I expect you could call them people — there. Still —" he smiled shamefacedly — "couldn't stand by and see my own way of life destroyed, could I?"

"I suppose not," Martin said.

"Would take moral courage. I don't have it. None of us does, except Conrad, and even he—" Ives looked out over the sea. "Must be a better way out than Conrad's," he said without conviction. "And

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everything will work out all right in the end. Bound to. No sense to — to anything, if it doesn't." He glanced wistfully at Martin.

"I hope so," said Martin. But he couldn't hope; he couldn't feel; he couldn't even seem to care.

During all this time, Conrad still did not put in an appearance. Martin had gotten to be such a crack shot with the ray pistol that he almost wished his descendant would show up, so there would be some excitement. But he didn't come. And Martin got to thinking . . .

He always felt that if any of the cousins could have come to realize the basic flaw in the elaborate plan they had concocted, it would have been Ives. However, when the yacht touched at Tierra del Fuego one bitter winter, Ives took a severe chill. They sent for a doctor from the future — one of the descendants who had been eccentric enough to take a medical degree — but he wasn't able to save Ives. The body was buried in the frozen ground at Ushuaia, on the southern tip of the continent, a hundred years or more before the date of his birth.

A great many of the cousins turned up at the simple ceremony. All were dressed in overwhelming black and showed a great deal of grief. Raymond read the burial service, because they didn't dare summon a clerical cousin from the future; they were afraid he might prove rather stuffy about the entire undertaking.

"He died for all of us," Raymond concluded his funeral eulogy over Ives, "so his death was not in vain."

But Martin disagreed.

THE ceaseless voyaging began again. *The Interregnum* voyaged to every ocean and every sea. Some were blue and some green and some dun. After a while, Martin couldn't tell one from another. Cousin after cousin came to watch over him and eventually they were as hard for him to tell apart as the different oceans.

All the cousins were young, for, though they came at different times in his life, they had all started out from the same time in theirs. Only the young ones had been included in the venture; they did not trust their elders.

As the years went by, Martin began to lose even his detached interest in the land and its doings. Although the yacht frequently touched port for fuel or supplies — it was more economical to purchase them in that era than to have them shipped from the future — he seldom went ashore, and then only at the urging of a newly assigned cousin anxious to see the sights. Most of

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the time Martin spent in watching the sea — and sometimes he painted it. There seemed to be a depth to his seascapes that his other work lacked.

When he was pressed by the current cousin to make a land visit somewhere, he decided to exhibit a few of his sea paintings. That way, he could fool himself into thinking that there was some purpose to this journey. He'd come to believe that perhaps what his life lacked was purpose, and for a while he kept looking for meaning everywhere, to the cousin's utter disgust.

"Eat, drink and be merry, or whatever you Romans say when you do as you do," the cousin—who was rather woolly in history; the descendants were scraping bottom now — advised.

Martin showed his work in Italy, so that the cousin could be disillusioned by the current crop of Romans. He found that neither purpose nor malice was enough; he was still immeasurably bored. However, a museum bought two of the paintings. Martin thought of Ives and felt an uncomfortable pang of a sensation he could no longer understand.

"Where do you suppose Conrad has been all this time?" Martin idly asked the current cousin — who was passing as his nephew by now.

The young man jumped, then glanced around him uncomfortably. "Conrad's a very shrewd fellow," he whispered. "He's biding his time — waiting until we're off guard. And then — pow! — he'll attack!"

"Oh, I see," Martin said.

He had often fancied that Conrad would prove to be the most stimulating member of the whole generation. But it seemed unlikely that he would ever have a chance for a conversation with the young man. More than one conversation, anyhow.

"When he does show up, I'll protect you," the cousin vowed, touching his ray gun. "You haven't a thing to worry about."

Martin smiled with all the charm he'd had nothing to do but acquire. "I have every confidence in you," he told his descendant. He himself had given up carrying a gun long ago.

There was a war in the Northern Hemisphere and so *The Interregnum* voyaged to southern waters. There was a war in the south and they hid out in the Arctic. All the nations became too drained of power — fuel and man and will — to fight, so there was a sterile peace for a long time. *The Interregnum* roamed the seas restlessly, with her load of passengers from the future, plus one bored and aging contemporary. She bore big guns now, because of the ever-present danger of pirates.

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PERHAPS it was the traditionally bracing effect of sea air — perhaps it was the sheltered life — but Martin lived to be a very old man. He was a hundred and four when his last illness came. It was a great relief when the family doctor, called in again from the future, said there was no hope. Martin didn't think he could have borne another year of life.

All the cousins gathered at the yacht to pay their last respects to their progenitor. He saw Ninian again, after all these years, and Raymond — all the others, dozens of them, thronging around his bed, spilling out of the cabin and into the passageways and out onto the deck, making their usual clamor, even though their voices were hushed.

Only Ives was missing. He'd been the lucky one, Martin knew. He had been spared the tragedy that was going to befall these blooming young people — all the same age as when Martin had last seen them and doomed never to grow any older. Underneath their masks of woe, he could see relief at the thought that at last they were going to be rid of their responsibility. And underneath Martin's death mask lay an impersonal pity for those poor, stupid descendants of his who had blundered so irretrievably.

There was only one face which Martin had never seen before. It wasn't a strange face, however, because Martin had seen one very like it in the looking glass when he was a young man.

"You must be Conrad," Martin called across the cabin in a voice that was still clear. "I've been looking forward to meeting you for some time."

The other cousins whirled to face the newcomer.

"You're too late, Con," Raymond gloated for the whole generation. "He's lived out his life."

"But he hasn't lived out his life," Conrad contradicted. "He's lived out the life *you* created for him. And for yourselves, too."

For the first time, Martin saw compassion in the eyes of one of his lineage and found it vaguely disturbing. It didn't seem to belong there.

"Don't you realize even yet," Conrad went on, "that as soon as he goes, you'll go, too — present, past, future, wherever you are, you'll go up in the air like puffs of smoke?"

"What do you mean?" Ninian quavered, her soft, pretty face alarmed.

Martin answered Conrad's rueful smile, but left the explanations up to him. It was his show, after all.

"Because you will never have existed," Conrad said. "You have no right to existence; it was you yourselves who watched him all

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the time, so he didn't have a chance to lead a normal life, get married, *have children . . .*"

MOST of the cousins gasped as the truth began to percolate through.

"I knew from the very beginning," Conrad finished, "that I didn't have to do anything at all. I just had to wait and you would destroy yourselves."

"I don't understand," Bartholomew protested, searching the faces of the cousins closest to him. "What does he mean, we have never existed? We're here, aren't we? What —"

"Shut up!" Raymond snapped. He turned on Martin. "You don't seem surprised."

The old man grinned. "I'm not. I figured it all out years ago."

At first, he had wondered what he should do. Would it be better to throw them into a futile panic by telling them or to do nothing? He had decided on the latter; that was the role they had assigned him — to watch and wait and keep out of things — and that was the role he would play.

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"You knew all the time and you didn't tell us!" Raymond spluttered. "After we'd been so good to you, making a gentleman out of you instead of a criminal . . . That's right," he snarled, "a criminal! An alcoholic, a thief, a derelict! How do you like that?"

"Sounds like a rich, full life," Martin said wistfully.

What an exciting existence they must have done him out of! But then, he couldn't help thinking, he — he and Conrad together, of course — had done them out of *any* kind of existence. It wasn't his responsibility, though; he had done nothing but let matters take whatever course was destined for them. If only he could be sure that it was the better course, perhaps he wouldn't feel that nagging sense of guilt inside him. Strange — where, in his hermetic life, could be possibly have developed such a queer thing as a conscience?

"Then we've wasted all this time," Ninian sobbed, "all this energy, all this money, for nothing!"

"But you were nothing to begin

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with," Martin told them. And then, after a pause, he added, "I only wish I could be sure there had been some purpose to this."

He didn't know whether it was approaching death that dimmed his sight, or whether the frightened crowd that pressed around him was growing shadowy.

"I wish I could feel that some good had been done in letting you be wiped out of existence," he went on voicing his thoughts. "But I know that the same thing that happened to your worlds and my world will happen all over again. To other people, in other times, but again. It's bound to happen. There isn't any hope for humanity."

One man couldn't really change the course of human history, he told himself. Two men, that was — one real, one a shadow.

Conrad came close to the old man's bed. He was almost transparent.

"No," he said, "there is hope. They didn't know the time transmitter works two ways. I used it for going into the past only once — just this once. But I've gone into the future with it many times. And —" he pressed Martin's hand —"believe me, what I did — what *we* did, you and I — serves a purpose. It will change things for the better. Everything is going to be all right."

WAS Conrad telling him the truth, Martin wondered, or was he just giving the conventional reassurance to the dying? More than that, was he trying to convince himself that what he had done was the right thing? Every cousin had assured Martin that things were going to be all right.

Was Conrad *actually* different from the rest?

His plan had worked and the others' hadn't, but then all his plan had consisted of was doing nothing. That was all he and Martin had done . . . nothing. Were they absolved of all responsibility merely because they had stood aside and taken advantage of the others' weaknesses?

"Why," Martin said to himself, "in a sense, it could be said that I have fulfilled my original destiny — that I am a criminal."

Well, it didn't matter; whatever happened, no one could hold him to blame. He held no stake in the future that was to come. It was other men's future — other men's problem. He died very peacefully then, and, since he was the only one left on the ship, there was nobody to bury him.

The unmanned yacht drifted about the seas for years and gave rise to many legends, none of them as unbelievable as the truth.

— EVELYN E. SMITH

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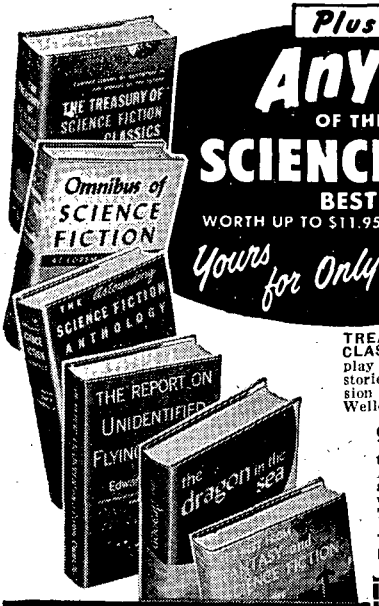
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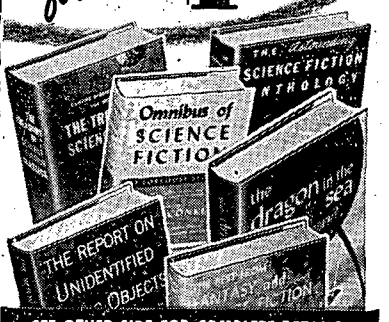
Your reservation includes many amazing facts: your actual weight on the Moon, a Rocket Ship Schedule, etc. To get your wallet-size Moon Tour Reservation right away, take the Quiz below. Then choose ANY 3 of the exciting books described on the other side—for only $1 with membership in the Science-Fiction Book Club. Mail coupon at once!

Any 3 OF THESE COMPLETE NEW MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE-FICTION

Yours for Only $1.00 WITH MEMBERSHIP



CAN YOU PASS THIS LUNAR QUIZ?

How much do you know about the Moon? Circle the answers you think are correct, fill out reverse side, and mail today for your Genuine Moon-Tour Reservation Certificate.

1. Diameter of the Moon is: smaller — greater — the same as Earth's.
2. Since its gravity is weaker than Earth's, on the Moon you would weigh: more — less than on Earth.
3. The Moon is really a: star — satellite — planet.
4. Distance to the Moon is about: 93,000,000 miles — 238,000 miles — 9,000 miles.
5. Scientists have proved that human life does — does not exist on the Moon.
6. Surface of the Moon is rough — smooth — covered with water.

IMPORTANT: This application will NOT be honored unless filled out and signed on the reverse side.

SEE OTHER SIDE OF COUPON FOR UP TO $11.95 WORTH OF SCIENCE-FICTION BEST SELLERS FOR ONLY $1.00!

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR COMPLETE DETAILS

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